

Why are exhibitions and museums so important? What can they be used for? Who determines relevance in a transformative process?

Transforming exhibitions is not just something you do, it is something that gets better the more you do it. This book looks at the intersection of the visitor or user, who gets personal and cultural meaning from their visit and the museum as it appears in the design of the exhibition. It examines on-site communication for intentional and hidden content and messages, and reveals possible relations to the visitor, his or her world and society in general. This investigation also focuses on the processes involved in interpretation and design and takes a closer look at the practices of exhibiting rather than the objects on display. The four main themes in the book are:

- **Constructions – The visitor at an exhibition**
- **Questions – Experience and learning processes**
- **Invisibles – The exhibition design processes**
- **Openings – Category, objects and communication**

Present on site is relevant not only for students and researchers in the field of museum communication, media and design studies, but also for exhibition and museum practitioners.

” This is an important, useful, well-designed and well-written book.

Ingemann insightfully argues for the importance of inspirational places in a world mediated by television and digital technologies, by showing how museums link past and present, time and space. He takes on complex, difficult, and controversial issues, and explains them clearly. What happens when visitors become curators? What happens when the familiar meets the new, when the invisible is made visible? As he shows, it results in changing visitors' perceptions, conversations, and confidence. Museums can change our lives, the things we make and discuss, and the world as a whole.

- Course Director Dr **Kevin Walker**,
Information Environments,
University of the Arts London

” *Present on Site* brings new attention to the complex and intriguing world of interpretation in museum settings. Using a variety of compelling case studies and theories from education, media, and cultural studies, Ingemann weaves diverse perspectives to the critical issues of visitor perception and reception and the challenges involved as curators and designers attempt to mediate and influence experience. The result is a delightful and refreshingly personal exposé of key museological issues that face museum practitioners daily.

- Associate Director **Karen Knutson**,
University of Pittsburgh



**Present on
Site** Transforming
Exhibitions and
Museums
Bruno Ingemann



Present on Site

Bruno Ingemann

For Pia

Present on Site
Transforming Exhibitions
and Museums

VisualMemoryPress

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A few of the chapters in this book were published before, in a nearly unaltered form, and many others have been rewritten from Danish to English. Chapters 3, 4, 12, 22 were previously published in *Nordic Museology*. In the section on the possibilities of exhibitions, Chapter 8 appeared in *Udstillinger mellem fokus og flimmer* [*Exhibition between Focus and Flicker*] (2006). Chapters 6 and 13 were published in Danish in the anthology called *Visuel Kultur – viden, liv, politik* [*Visual Culture: Knowledge, Life, Politics*]. Chapter 2, which covers a local historical museum exhibition and the construction of the model-user, derives from our book *Ny dansk museologi* [*New Danish Museology*].

Two chapters have appeared earlier in English, namely chapter 15, in an anthology called *Design Research: Synergies from Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (2010), and chapter 24, in *Researching Experiences* (2008). Minor parts of many various projects performed over more than a decade have previously been published and are duly cited in the references in the book.

Most of the visuals are by the author, with other contributors mentioned individually in the captions. I want to thank the art museum AroS for permission to photograph in the exhibition (chapter 5).

Note

- 1 This project is part of DREAM (Danish Research Centre on Education and Advanced Media Materials): www.dream.dk

Preface

Gaea Leinhardt and Karen Knutson's book, *Listening in on Museum Conversation*, begins with the statement, "For both of us, museums are fascinating and enchanting places. They are places of enormous beauty, places of transport, and places that reflect both the most conservative views of the status quo and the most provocative new ideas of our time" (2004: vii). They continue, "... we share here our own personal identification with the museums of our childhood and adolescence" (Ibid.)

For me, Bruno Ingemann, museums are fascinating and enchanting places, but they also represent lost opportunities, a lack of inclusive communication and missing interactions. This will be elaborated upon more in the introduction chapter, but for now my interest in museums is driven by a desire to push stable, hierarchic institutions into expanding the potential resources of exhibitions toward more provocative and meaningful communication.

In my family and in the rather small town where I grew up, going to museums was not the norm so they were not part of my childhood. At fifteen I began creating my own museum without walls, – a practice that mimicked André Malraux, though I had no idea who he was or how he combined photographs of artwork from many sources and cultures.

The impetus for this museum without walls came when I encountered a reproduction of an abstract painting by Kandinsky and began wondering about the basic idea of acknowledgement. When this abstract painting was reproduced in colour in a book, then there must be something worth looking into and reconsidering, even though I did not understand why this painting was independently something.

Within a year I had scraped enough money together to buy some canvases, a few tubes of oil paint and some brushes. I began by painting

in a naturalistic style, but soon began experimenting in the realm of abstract painting, woodcuts and linocuts.

My journey into museums and my interest in museum communication and the way exhibition visitors and users are encountered and engaged started not with museums and exhibitions, but from the far more productive process of learning-by-doing that later led to meeting, experiencing and analysing museums and exhibitions. The initial outflow of paintings, drawings, woodcuts, linocuts and exhibitions started in 1961 when I was sixteen and lasted nearly a decade. This period was followed by a second highly productive round of output as a professional graphic designer working in co-operation with groups of environmental activists to produce exhibitions clearly designed to inform and influence public opinion and the political system about a rather new and highly complex topic. These two productive periods were combined with teaching e.g. activist groups, environmentalists, architects, communication planners and producers and culminated in a book called, *Udstillingshåndbogen: Teknik, æstik for fortælleformer* [The Exhibition Handbook: Technique, Aesthetic and Narrative Style] (1986).

During this time, I met a variety of people working in museums as exhibition designers and encountered different views on democratisation, exhibition language, popularisation, valuable content and attractive forms. The exhibitions at the museums were critiqued and discussed and new ideas came up.

In 1990 I earned a PhD and started working as a researcher at Roskilde University in Denmark. For over nearly twenty years I ran workshops on exhibition and communication together with Professor Søren Kjörup that focused on production and also on visiting museum exhibitions in order to use them for analysis and discussion closely related to the production of new exhibitions. The focus was, to quote Karen Knutson, “Who decides which story to tell? And how do they tell it?” (Leinhardt & Knutson 2004: ix). But I was also interested in exhibitions as seen from the user’s perspective: What are the questions they want answered? What knowledge are we expected to have? Who will be included and excluded? What about relevance?

This book is a collection of articles written over a period of ten years. My membership in the Museology Network since 1998 has been a vital impetus for my research because the network has provided a forum for the presentation and discussion of papers and articles of relevance to the highly influential Scandinavian journal *Nordic Museology*, which originally published some of the chapters of this book in Danish. Functioning as a fruitful medium, work in the network led to the anthology *New Danish Museology* (2005), which frames museums and exhibitions as an idea, analysing the ideological foundation for the museum and taking a

critical look at the visitor perspective and communication strategies for collections and exhibitions.

Experience is, of course, essential in exhibitions, but my interest led me to exploring processual and experimental methods in cultural analysis. The visitors or users of an exhibition were narrowly defined. We explored how the person-in-situation experiences and constructs meaning from the complexity of traces and narratives in an exhibition (Gjedde & Ingemann 2008).

Available online

My interest and appreciation for openness and free access to information and research naturally led to making my book available and accessible through a variety of channels. This means that this entire book is accessible at www.present-on-site.net, where it can be read online or downloaded as a colour PDF. A key feature is that many of the exhibitions covered in the analysis of visitor interaction processes and designer processes have a *visual* form. The book’s website has videos and various pictorial elements that provide an even broader foundation for the analysis, making the processes more concrete. The main focus however is the book, whose text and design complete the examination of meaning-making processes related to being present on site, at exhibitions and at museums.

To the reader

This book is written at the intersection between the visitor and the presenter. The museological framework and the various theoretical concepts in the field of exhibitions and museums focus on the user, on complex interaction, on communication and, thereby, on the mediation and dissemination necessary for the encounter between the visitor and the institution to be a valuable and rewarding experience in the transformational process.

Present on site is relevant not only for students and researchers in the field of museum communication, media and design studies, but also for exhibition and museum practitioners. Even the most practical and usable insight must be driven by theoretical perspectives that open up for viewing common knowledge from a fresh perspective that transform the well-known into something new.

*Lejre, Denmark, November 2011,
Bruno Ingemann*

Intro:

Why objects, showcases, exhibitions and museums are so important

Feeling enthusiastic about an exhibition or the objects presented is one way of entering into the realm of art, history and nature at a museum. Wonder is another way. Resonance a third. It is not possible to spend years visiting exhibitions and galleries without being fascinated and feeling “resonance and wonder” as Stephen Greenblatt so aptly puts it (1991:42).

My perspective is not from the point of view of individual museums or museum genres, e.g. art galleries, natural science museums and history museums, and then out into society – but the other way around. I am a human being living in society. I visit many museums with various kinds of exhibitions and am also engaged in other important aspects of human life. Maybe an exhibition can give me something, maybe not. An outside perspective enables me as the visitor, viewer and analyst to maintain a distance to the internal affairs of the museum and to remain an informed visitor, yet nevertheless an ordinary person who wants the museum to be attentive to my needs and who wants to experience or maybe learn something. As the museologist Kenneth Hudson wrote many years ago, “Most visitors to museums are not studying for an examination in zoology, agricultural engineering, anthropology, [or] art history ...” (1987:175). Ordinary visitors generally do not subdivide the world into these types of categories.

Present on site

The first part of the title of this book, *Present on site*, focuses on the concept of visitors being in the present and being aware of centring their attention on the now, not to mention having an open mind and open senses. Present on site also literally means being on site at a museum and an exhibition, where many unusual experiences are possible and often



expected to take place. In the field of contemporary art, articles from daily life and ordinary surroundings can be transformed into an open art space. The ambience of streets, gardens, shops, houses and sitting rooms can become part of an exhibition and work as tools for artistic expression. An event that took place in the small rural town of Lejre, Denmark, illustrates this process.

In the summer of 2001 as part of a project called Camp Lejre, the town was invaded for a few weeks by 47 international artists from eight different countries. The town's 3000 inhabitants were asked if any of them would like to open their homes and gardens as the setting for site-specific art work and then allow these areas to be open to the public for three consecutive weekends, basically turning any volunteers into a mixture of curators, watchmen and owners. More than thirty people accepted the proposal and agreed to let the artists into their homes to create something new. Visitors during the open house weekends were mainly locals curious not just to see the art works, but also one another's homes. Many people however also came from other cities, especially Copenhagen. This was an extraordinary, exciting event.

One of the artists had two families participate in a project in which objects from one family were moved into the other family's home and vice versa. The project was called, *If you remember, I'll forget ...* Fifty-nine objects from the Westergaard family were placed in the Holmbjerg family home and forty-four objects from the Holmbjerg's were placed at the Westergaard's.

How was it possible for visitors to know what the premise of this project was? I reside in Lejre and spent a warm, sunny Saturday afternoon



The Westergaard home with the objects from the Holmbjerg family. Video screendump.



The Holmbjerg home with the objects from the Westergaard family. Video screendump.



navigating my way around the different sites using a map and a pamphlet with project titles with a numbered list of names and addresses of participating families. Most of my information about *If you remember, I'll forget ...* came from a woman in the Westergaard family who immediately made clear that all of the paintings and other art objects in her home were from the other family. Pointing out where the other family lived 500 metres away on another street, she explained, "I also feel different. I nearly can't stand being here!" Later, after I enquired about some small life-like porcelain figurines, she disassociates herself from them by exclaiming, "... all the Royal Porcelain is not ours!"

Although curious, we cautiously entered the gardens and homes of people we had never met. Under the cover of the event and the protective presence of other visitors we walked through what was otherwise a private area but what had been transformed into a public space for three weekends in a row. The most important aspect of the experience was the newly acquired perspective or gaze at the ordinary and familiar. Although we had never seen the Westergaard family home before, it was familiar because it resembled many other homes we had visited before. There were tables, chairs, carpets, bookshelves etc. But there was also something new: the pictures and the small figurines. Normally, when visiting a home, these art objects remain relatively unseen as they blend in to create the ambience and mood of the home. Often they are nearly invisible, unnoticed due to how commonplace they are.

Knowing that the art objects belong to "the others" and are "not ours" increases the inclination to look at them more intensely. The initial, somewhat superficial impression is that the objects seem to fit well

into the Westergaard home, so we look more carefully at the paintings. What about their colour and how they fit with the sofa? Or what about the paintings' expression? Were they too bold and aggressive or too soft and weak? Did the family simply lack a sense of connection and personal history with the paintings?

This reaction and distance to "the others" and our reflections made us eager to visit the other family, the Holmbjergs. Seeing their art objects here made us want to see their normal setting and we were also curious about seeing the Westergaard family's objects in unaccustomed surroundings. At the Holbjerg's comments were made about "the others", but they were also supplemented by personal observations and moments of inspiration. For example, the woman in the family explained, "An owl like this is fabulous. We need to have a glass owl like this – when the sun is low in the sky the light is fantastic".

The discussion in this home was different not only because the mixture of ten visitors was different but also because of the family's focus on the fact that their home was being invaded by so many strangers three weekends in a row. The statement, "We need to be home!" stresses the point that their normal family life was also changed by the simple duty of having to be present on site. Due to the openness of the family, visitors discussed their experiences at other sites and with some of the fifty other works of art. They were excited about meeting so many new people and reconnecting with neighbours they had not seen for a long time.

In a book describing the entire project and its individual elements, *Camp Lejre*, artist Jesper Fabricius describes the concept of exchange behind *If you remember, I'll forget ...* and reflects on the whole process:

The difference between the 'private' and the 'general/public' has been my most essential interest and an incentive in my work *If you remember, I'll forget ...* When you follow that part of the organiser's proposal and place art in private homes, you find yourself in a dilemma. Are you in a private space, or has the private space become public? This is, for instance very much the case in the reality shows we see on several TV channels, as well as in the phenomenon where people film themselves in more or less intimate situations in their own homes and put in out on the Internet. My thought was to go in the opposite direction and make a project that would only speak to the two families involved (who very generously let me into their homes). The thought was to swap their pictures and objects of art around between the homes. ... For the audience who came to see the exhibition in a private home, the exhibition was ... invisible at first sight. Then what happened was - which I hadn't foreseen, perhaps naively - that the hosts told the visitors about the project, and thus made the invisible visible again (2002:96).

Fabricius is essentially asking, "Is it even art? I don't know." But seen from the concept of *relational aesthetics*, as coined by French curator Nicholas Bourriaud, the project's use of daily objects, social practices and their transformation is part of thinking relationally. Bourriaud basically believes that what we call reality in fact is a simple montage. The aesthetic challenge of contemporary art resides in recomposing that montage: art is an editing table that enables us to realise alternative, temporary versions of reality involving everyday life. The artist de-programmes in order to re-programme, suggesting that there are other possible usages for techniques, tools and spaces at our disposition. He sees artists as facilitators rather than makers and regards art as information exchanged between the artist and the viewers. The tools of the artist are no longer merely canvas, paint, bronze etc. but daily activities like massages, bathing, second-hand shops, serving a meal, interviews, encounters and questionnaires (Bourriaud 1998/2002).

This leads to a question viewers are entitled to ask concerning any aesthetic production: Does this work allow me to enter into a dialogue? Could I exist, and how, in the space it defines? A form is more or less democratic ... that is [if it] do[es] not allow the viewer to complete the form (Bourriaud 1998/2002:109). When Bourriaud developed his concept of relational aesthetics it was based on his observations as the curator of artists' works powering the new tools and their re-programming of daily life and interactions. Fond of going to galleries to look at Rothko and Kandinsky, Warhol and Kosuth, Sherman and Viola, I found that Bourriaud's texts, including shorter articles I had read more than ten years earlier that later led to his influential book, *Relational Aesthetics*, gave me a new gaze and a new framework for visual art and its relation to social life in society.

Telling – entering a dialogue

What are the stories to be told? Which kinds of themes or dynamic events in society need to be introduced and exposed in exhibitions? And who is the form and content created for in the attempt to include and allow dialogue?

Suzanne Keene questions the whole idea of the anti-elite exhibition, saying, "Perhaps the responses of museums in developing education and out-reach services is correct: it is the exhibition to be visited that lacks the postmodern flavour" (2006:5). Eilean Hooper-Greenhill contrasts the 'modernist' museum with what she terms the 'post-museum'. The essence of the post-museum involves more of a process or experience than a building to be visited. In it, the role of the exhibitions is to focus a plethora of transient activities – dynamic events within and without the museum (Hooper-Greenhill 2000:152-153).

Exhibitions can have their starting point in e.g. works of art, ob-

jects, the timeline of archaeology and art history but can these categories and traditions be animated by focusing on themes and challenges in society? In order to explore the topic of entering into dialogue in more detail, I will discuss vital issues brought up by two prominent museologists, museum director Kenneth Hudson, author of the book *Museums of Influence* (1987), and museum director Robert Janes, author of the book *Museums in a Troubled World* (2009).

In 1987 Hudson claimed that, "... museums only fully develop their potential for action, when they are actually involved in the major problems of contemporary society" (1987:112). Delving further into the subject by doing a detailed exploration of what the main problems are now and what they will be in the future, he ranks five key issues based on importance:

First, the degradation of the natural environment under the joint onslaught of greed and ignorance. Second, the political, scientific and financial pressure which combine to concentrate enormous, and possibly irresponsible power in the hands of the military machines of the United States ... Third, the truly tragic fact that decolonisation has not worked ... in the sense that the world's former colonial territories are ... poorer, more insecure, and worse-governed than in the days when they were controlled by European power. Fourth, that knowledge is becoming increasingly divided and specialised, and increasingly incomprehensible to laymen. This specialisation has extended to art and music, from more and more of which the common man feels himself totally excluded. And, fifth, that persons in positions of power and influence protect themselves by sheltering behind walls of generalisations and vague terminology. The gap between the concrete, the local, the real on the one hand and the prestigious, the theoretical, the national and the international on the other becomes steadily wider (Hudson 1987:173-174).

These five major issues can be further divided into different parts. The last two points about specialisation of knowledge and the gap between people in positions of power and influence and the 'others' can easily be connected to museums and exhibitions, which may broaden the gap between who is included and excluded when visiting a museum. The first three points focus on political and financial power. Hudson's description of the international community is couched in strong words such as greed, ignorance, irresponsible and tragic, indicating a prioritisation of the main issues where environmental issues are at the top. Then power. Then decolonisation. Hudson believes that these five features of modern society combine to give the social and intellectual elite more confidence

and the masses much less, which consequently means that the most important objective of museums is to give visitors confidence.

Almost twenty-five years after these views were presented the question is whether this objective is still the most important. Does it in fact need to be adjusted? In 2008 Janes writes about the social responsibility museums have and points out five tectonic stresses that accumulate deep beneath the surface of our societies and that he believes museums have the responsibility to present and discuss:

1. Population stress arising from differences in the population growth rates between rich and poor societies, and from the spiraling growth of mega-cities in poor countries;
2. Energy stress – above all, from the increasing scarcity of conventional oil;
3. Environmental stress from worsening damage to our land, water, forests and fisheries;
4. Climate stress from changes in the makeup of our atmosphere; and,
5. Economic stress resulting from instabilities in the global economic system, and ever-widening income gaps between the rich and the poor (2008:22).

Catching sight of what has changed since 1987 when Hudson ranked environmental issues first is not difficult. The global concerns on Janes' list cover population, energy, climate and environmental issues. The military industrial power complex and decolonisation issues are left out as are the specialisation of knowledge and the gap between people in positions of power and influence and the masses. Janes presents the five issues in a perfunctory way, even the word 'stress' can be construed as neutral. Nevertheless he has expectations about what museums need to do, stating "It appears that we need to move beyond the rational and start talking about values, our emotions and ... our principles of right and wrong" (2008:22).

Here we are at the core of the discussion on dynamic events occurring in the plethora of transient activities in and outside the museum. The ethical questions and the relevance of the issues selected and presented relate to what Hudson stresses as the most important aim museums have, i.e. giving visitors confidence. From a communication research perspective these five issues of importance for socially responsible museums come from a sender perspective, i.e. that of society and museums. It is the responsibility of museum curators and organisations to address and push forward these important issues.

Users, visitors and other individuals may define this responsibility differently. Phenomenologist Alfred Schutz (1970) finds that the rela-

tions in people's lifeworld are determined by three types of basic and interdependent relevancies: 1) *motivational relevance* is governed by a person's interest, prevailing at a particular time in a specific situation and it only works satisfactorily in situations whose general features and ingredients are sufficiently familiar; 2) *topical relevance* is where the unknown or problematic in a situation becomes relevant only insofar as it blocks the forming of a definition of the situation and it becomes the theme of their cognitive efforts. People must turn themselves from a potential actor into a potential problem solver and they must define what the problem is; and 3) *interpretational relevance* is an extension of topical relevance. The recognition of the problem itself and its formulation as a problem necessitate further interpretation. A new interpretation can only be accomplished by putting the problem in the larger context of the frustrated actor's knowledge, which, the actor surmises, has bearing on the understanding of the problem (Wagner 1979:22-23).

These different views and commitment to *what* exhibitions are about makes the founding elements for a concrete exhibition fertile soil for dilemmas and conflicts. Museums and curators have the power to define what is important for them to present and persuade an audience with. In the end, it is the various individual visitors and users or non-visitors and non-users who have the power to accept or reject the attempts to be included.

Snow White – out of the realm of the art space

A major Swedish newspaper's front page story is surprisingly about a contemporary work of art placed outside in the courtyard of a gallery, where a little, yet predominant white boat with a flag with an oval black and white portrait of a young woman with red lips. The little boat floats in a pool of red water or blood and there are two people standing by the pool looking at the white boat or at the photographer and us – the readers. A floodlight stresses the artificiality of the situation.

What was this front page story all about? The story, it turns out, was not about the installation, *Snow White and the Madness of Truth*, jointly created by Israeli-born Swedish composer/musician Dror Feiler and his Swedish wife, artist Gunilla Sköld Feiler. The small white boat is called *Snow White* and the portrait is of Hanadi Jaradat, a Palestinian suicide bomber. Bach's *Mein Herze schwimmt im Blut (My Heart Swims in Blood)*, Cantata 199, is playing and the following text is written on a nearby wall, "My heart swims in blood / because the brood of my sins / in God's holy eyes / makes me into a monster". According to the artists, the installation was designed to "... call attention to how weak people left alone can be capable of horrible things". A display in the courtyard contains a text that alternates between bold quotes from the Brother Grimm's original *Snow White* and the artists' own musings in italics:

Ill. 2: Snow White in the courtyard of the Swedish Museum of National Antiquities. An art installation by Dror Feiler and Gunilla Sköld Deiler (2004). Press photo by the Museum of National Antiquities.



Snow White and the Madness of Truth

Once upon a time in the middle of winter
For the June 12 deaths of her brother, and her cousin
 and three drops of blood fell
She was also a woman
 as white as snow, as red as blood, and her hair was as black as ebony
Seemingly innocent with universal non-violent character, less suspicious of intentions
 and the red looked beautiful upon the white
 The murderer will yet pay the price and we will not be the only
ones who are crying
 like a weed in her heart until she had no peace day and night
Hanadi Jaradat was a 29-year-old lawyer
 I will run away into the wild forest, and never come home again
Before the engagement took place, he was killed in an encounter with the Israeli security forces
 and she ran over sharp stones and through thorns
She said: Your blood will not have been shed in vain
 and was about to pierce Snow White's innocent heart
She was hospitalized, prostrate with grief, after witnessing the shootings
 The wild beasts will soon have devoured you

After his death, she became the breadwinner and she devoted herself solely to that goal

“Yes,” said Snow White, “with all my heart.”

Weeping bitterly, she added: “If our nation cannot realize its dream and the goals of the victims, and live in freedom and dignity, then let the whole world be erased”

Run away, then, you poor child

She secretly crossed into Israel, charged into a Haifa restaurant, shot a security guard, blew herself up, and murdered 19 innocent civilians as white as snow, as red as blood, and her hair was as black as ebony

And many people are indeed crying: the Zer Aviv family, the Almog family, and all the relatives and friends of the dead and the wounded and the red looked beautiful upon the white.

This installation appeared in the Museum of National Antiquities (Historiska muséet) in Stockholm, Sweden from January 17 - February 7, 2004. The idea and context presented on the museum website for the installation was that it was part of the *Making Differences* exhibition, in conjunction with Stockholm International Forum 2004: *Preventing Genocide*. The title attempts to pose the question: Does it make a difference? Do we make a difference? Can art, photography etc. make any difference? - in order to engage people in a dialogue about these matters. Many of the shows also illustrate individual people's work who we believe do make a difference when it comes to opening people's eyes toward a larger understanding, and a broader view of the issues. Art, journalism and documentaries have a say in forming opinions amongst people.

Done in a responsible way, art can actually have a value and a meaning beyond being just art itself - it can make people reflect on, and better be prepared, for a discussion and understanding of the events of the world.

The goals described on the website in the art sphere of the museum and the exhibition on preventing genocide were transformed into another event and presented differently in the media. The article on the front page was written not by an art critic but by a journalist from the business desk. The article did not review the artwork in an art history context and the central message on tolerance, freedom of thought and diversity got lost.

The Israeli ambassador in Sweden, Zvi Mazel, is the one who got all the attention because of his destructive actions when he came to the exhibition's opening and saw *Snow White and the Madness of Truth*. There were reports in the news, and later on television, of the ambassador walking in the dark up to the floodlight and attacking the installation by disconnecting the electric cords and throwing one of the lights into the

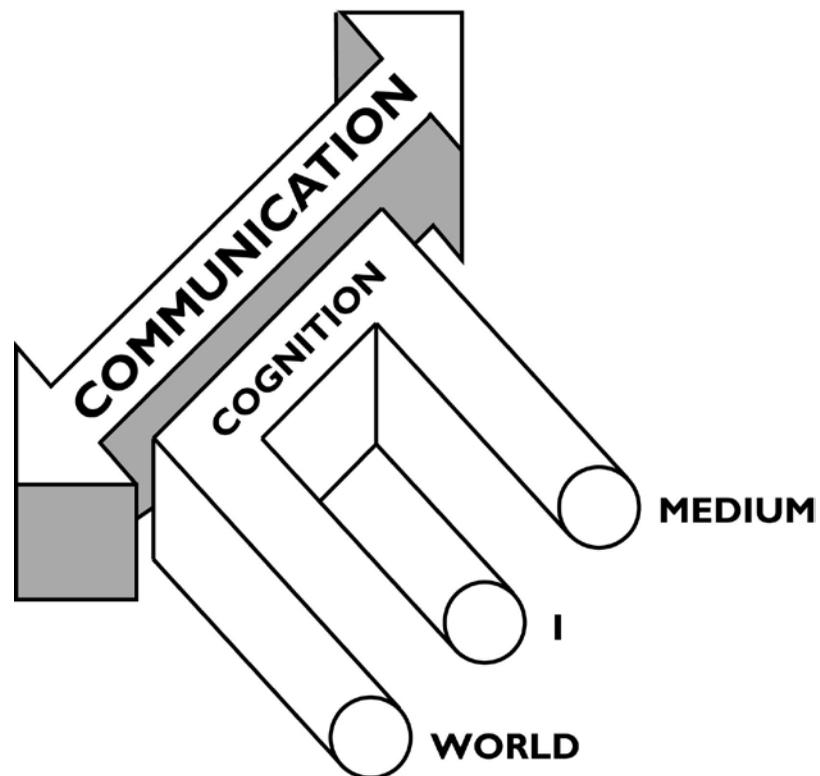
pond. The ambassador's attack on the installation quickly became an art scandal, yielding 128,000 hits on Google at the height of the controversy. Sköld Feiler and Feiler were terrorised and threatened with anonymous phone calls, e-mails and letters. The Israeli government tried to force the Swedish government to take the installation down, claiming it was anti-Semitic in nature. The Swedish government stood firm and defended the freedom of expression.

The introduction to the exhibition prepares the ground for entering into dialogue, employing phrases like, “Can art ... engage people in a dialogue ... a discussion and understanding of the events of the world”. The built-in mechanisms of the news machine demanded focusing on the conflict, while the political system was good at transforming the goal of promoting dialogue and openness into a narrow, propagandist story on anti-Semitism versus freedom of speech.

The phrase on the Swedish museum's website, “... engage people in a dialogue ...” should be seen in the context of what happens in the exhibition sphere when people individually and in pairs walk around, look, talk and reflect with each other. The people in dialogue with one another often know each other well, their openness and rejection of ideas, to a large extent, frequently mirror each other. Their dialogue is governed by the system of relevancies described by Schutz and the desire for new insight is powered by topical and interpretational relevance.

The case of *Snow White and the Madness of Truth* shows the difficulty in looking at a work of art purely as an object to be look at, walked around, read or heard. There is a need to bring the artwork into the realm of visual culture. American theorist Nicholas Mirzoeff points to the important idea that visual culture is “... defined ... by the interaction between the viewer and the viewed, which may be termed the visual event” (Mirzoeff 1999:13).

A limited number of people saw the original *Snow White* installation in Stockholm during the tree weeks in 2004 when it was on display. The commotion it caused illustrates how it was concretely transformed into a *visual event* by the Israeli ambassador's actions and the media's willingness to add fuel to the fire. The concept of moving the object of the interpretation from the artwork itself and into a variety of contexts created new viewers and new interpretations. The story of how the visual event unfolded and was received underlines the significance of tracing the various interactions that took place to create the visual event. In addition to the process of revealing and understanding the creation of the visual event, it is also essential to recognise and emphasise the diversity of actual viewers or users in the creation of the visual event. In the end, it is the viewers and the users who become the most crucial element in the creation of a visual event.



Ill. 3: M-I-W model: The processes of communication transform the practitioner's knowledge in three interwoven fields: medium – I – world (Ingemann 1992:19).

What do people process in the museum space?

Many years ago Falk and Dierking came up with a brilliant model in *The Museum Experience* which divides the museum experience into physical, social and personal contexts. They moved the interest away from the exhibition itself and into the experiences of visitors and their learning processes (Falk & Dierking 1992).

In the early 1990s I was struggling with the complex idea of integrating or extending the reception experience with a more productive experience. I was searching for an understanding of what actually happens in museums and exhibitions in the *process* of viewing, walking, talking and creating. From my perspective, the Museum Experience model lacked the elements I needed to pursue the ideas I was tussling with. Although excellent, the model's scope and especially its methodological angle were limited. When museum and exhibition visitors and users are the most important part of creating a visual event, relying solely on verbal interviews with them seemed too confining. I found that interview results could be difficult to transform into a concrete and productive practice for professional curators and designers. The data from the visitor process of exper-

riencing and interpreting was missing something. How could I add more and more differentiated information to the process of experience?

First I reduced the complex setting of the exhibition on site to a more familiar and more manageable medium and situation, namely the production of an article in a magazine by young, non-professional communication students. How did they, as actors and learners, consciously and subconsciously acquire knowledge and experience? There are at least three main areas in which they gain knowledge and experience: medium – I – world (M-I-W) (Ingemann 1992:19). In the following the three elements of the M-I-W model are described.

Medium: People acquire theoretical and analytical insight into how this specific medium is used as viewers *and* as producers. Theoretical and analytical aspects are supplemented with *knowledge from experience* acquired through the concrete productive use of the medium.

Media productions often reproduce the most dominant practice. The core problem in this approach is that transferring intellectual knowledge to practical media production produces the most idiotic, stereotypical solutions. "In order to avoid this we need not refrain from producing, but instead try to develop our very limited knowledge from experience through recurrent and lasting media production ... but instead producing more - and more binding productions. To produce with communication as the goal. We want to tell something to someone" (Ingemann 1992:20).

I: Communicating is not an abstract relation between a subject, a medium and a target group. People also learn something about themselves when they set out to communicate a subject. They participate as a member of a group that has reached agreement on the e.g. content, important points, choices, presentation and target group. Thus they need to learn to for example argue their points, make binding decisions, keep deadlines, criticise and investigate. They have to learn to relate to people who are different from they are when they seek information on the subject and the target group. They already have some knowledge, but it is extended and altered in the process involved in creating a media product.

World: In order to communicate something to someone there must be a decision as to what to communicate. The goal of communicating led the communication students to be more specific and more aware of the relevance to themselves and to their target group, but also to being more informed about their core issues of interest. They realised they needed to know more than they ended up communicating and that they needed to address counter arguments. The concept of communicating forced them to clarify their ideas and the topic in order to transform them into their own words, pictures and layout. Strict layout and design requirements for the content forced them to extend their knowledge even further.

Using the M-I-W model and conducting numerous communica-

tion production workshops gave the young participants not only broader insight into the media used and their own identity formation but also a deeper understanding of the world. The user-generated content was time consuming to produce and the amount of material resources needed was substantial. The processes of greatest interest were difficult to document because the creative processes mainly involved tacit knowledge (Polany 1967).

The problem I wanted to solve was how to transform the production insights gained from the workshops and the M-I-W model into a form that was applicable to the realm of museums and exhibitions. As a result I established a ground rule that the subjects participating in my area of research interest, documenting visitors and users' way of walking and talking related to the media, to their identity and to the content of the exhibition, had to know each other and would be selected after speaking to me in person. Visitors would see the exhibitions in pairs. The primary goals were to:

- Capture the ordinary dialogue between the two people walking through the exhibition.
- Capture how they moved and where they moved in the exhibition in order to record what they were looking at while in dialogue with one another.
- Interrupt their visit to make them aware of their own behaviour so they could step outside of their experience to dialogue with for example the researcher.
- Give people tools to express their concrete and emotional dialogue while using the exhibition. Contrary to Falk and Dierking I wanted to capture their experience in the unique moment of experiencing it.

Focusing on the processes of experiences with the *person-in-situation* provides a unique opportunity to get close to the media, the identity and the content communicated. I wanted to solve the problem of documenting the subtle and tacit knowledge in the creative and productive processes of relating to an exhibition as a visual event. I wanted to capture or better *produce* their dialogue and their walk and talk by producing a video, but the process had to be easy and involve simple technology. In 1993, when I came up with the idea, video cameras were heavy as well as difficult to use and produce with. Five years later tiny video cameras the size of a fountain pen were available, thus making it possible to design what I call the *video-cap*. Its size allowed the collection of rich material on the processes involved in creating experiences in an exhibition. The video-cap successfully made it possible to study in depth the person-in-situation, their dialogue and what they experienced while walking around.

Phenomenological experiences

Project partner Lisa Gjedde and I jointly developed the concept of experience and processes to look at the museum and exhibition experience up close (Gjedde & Ingemann 2008:99). The aim of examining the experience itself led us to work from a phenomenological point of view and to look for the subjective understanding and meaning of the experience. According to Schutz the everyday world of activity represents what is archetypical for our experience of reality and that what he calls province of meaning can only be seen as modifications of this archetype. Schutz believes that the province of meaning is the art, the fantasy, the play, the insanity and the science, each of which has its own cognitive style (Schutz 1962:231).

We want to understand the mediated situation from the perspective of people's everyday lives by an emphatic understanding of their subjective universe of meaning. From the phenomenological standpoint, we want to investigate the world as the participants experience it. This concept leads to an interest in what the subjective meanings are and how they are constructed. In the process of developing methods on how to research experience we have found ways to capture different aspects of how the person-in-situation creates meaning and we have applied approaches and concepts relevant to that. In our book *Researching Experiences*, we provide a framework for researching experience that draws on new models of experience as well as models of reading strategies and narrative thinking combined with detailed descriptions of the use of technologies for capturing experiences.¹

The four themes in this book

My initial research question behind writing this book was why objects, showcases and exhibitions are so important. In my attempt to address this serious question and the challenges the areas involved present, I looked at the museum from the outside position of an ordinary user and from my own lifeworld. In brief I discovered or reaffirmed that the concept of contemporary art and especially relational aesthetic opens up for challenging views and acknowledgements; that defining the important issues at stake and their communication is essential for my research; and that knowing what and how people experience exhibitions and create relations, not to mention learn and create identity, is exciting.

These issues, which make up the framework of this book, were also identified as a result of unconscious, even hidden, motivation and cues derived from more than ten years of research. The projects I have developed did not evolve from a systematic coherent plan but arose most frequently from random coincidences and opportunities, but especially from the inclination and desire to pursue research and research tools in my field.

Another essential feature has been the sheer enjoyment and fun involved in developing ideas and writing.

Some of the following chapters were originally published in Danish, but their content and form have now been transformed in the process of being translated and edited. Collecting material for the twenty-four chapters in this book surprisingly meant discovering many new topics to be explored.

Divided into two main parts, the first half of the book focuses on the meaning making of visitors and how they are given the opportunity to interact and create their own experiences. The second half of the book focuses on the meaning making process of the curator/designer used to establish the decisive relation of form and content in an exhibition. The original concept was to investigate the creative processes of assemblage and creation closely aligned with the development of the concept and the aesthetics.

The title of the book, *Present on Site: Transforming Exhibitions and Museums*, is intended to encompass the active, creative involvement and interaction of visitors and curators/designers in the exhibition/museum. The aim is to learn something from the process of being a visitor and the practices involved (Soren 2009:234). The focus is not the works of art. Nor the objects. Nor the installations. The processes involved in being present on site are something one does and something one does better by doing them. The processes represent the values presented and the struggle to define, contest and support those values.

The first part: Constructions and questions

The first half is divided into two themes. The first theme, *Constructions – The visitor at an exhibition*, is significant from the curator's point of view, where the exhibition is clearly built up of individual and specific objects, while from the visitor's point of view the exhibition is primarily seen as a whole and as a narrative. Two major theoretical frameworks in the book are *narrativity* and the concept of the *Model User* as the competences the implied reader, viewer or visitor must have to understand and get something out of an exhibition. The visitor needs to have specific knowledge, attitudes and understanding to be included and accepted as a 'good enough' visitor and to be qualified to gain insight, acceptance and recognition. To make anything worth devotion there must be access to it and this access or entry way is the user's questions regarding the issues at stake and how they are framed.

In the second theme, *Questions – Experience and learning processes*, attention, reading strategies and relations are studied as processes of meaning making as they appear in the actual visitors' experiences. These experiences are seen with the phenomenological reflexivity of action, situation and reality in the various modes of being in the world through

the *person-in-situation*. The question is addressed as to how the person-in-situation constructs his or her identity and learning in the process of interaction with the actual exhibition. Another question is how the visitor constructs the experience with a clear start, conclusion and cohesive trajectory with a sense of fulfilment, unity and completion (Dewey 1934/1958).

The second part: Invisibles and Openings

Like the first half, the second half is divided into two themes. In the first theme, *Invisibles – The exhibition design process*, the epistemological interest is to unveil the subtle processes that take place when information, objects or moods have to be formulated, presented and communicated to an audience. This is the moment in the creation of concepts and ideas in a specific context and sometimes at a specific site. Through introspection, an intense *reflection-in-action* reveals the development of concepts for an exhibition in the creative process. The role of the media artist and designer is contested to clarify and talk about the difficult and often invisible design processes. The projects studied in this book reveal prototypical challenges and problems in relation to the communication milieu, institutions, content interpretation, communication and poetry.

The second theme, *Openings – Category, objects and communication*, deals with the intended content presented and used by a recipient. Communication however is not only form; it is also always the decisive content/form relation. A close look at museums in the first steps of the decision phase about an exhibition shows that central concepts such as original objects, authenticity, dialogue, taxonomy and user involvement emerge. This theme examines these concepts without providing answers as to how to do exhibitions that are more open and inclusive. The issues discussed form a basis for a more communication and design-oriented practice around the use of exhibitions on site as well as for looking even closer at the process behind producing exhibitions and involving the users, the users as visitors and the users as professionals (or amateur curators/designers).

The Danish framework

Why is it necessary to cross the Channel to have a different perspective and what is so different? A common opinion is that Anglo-American museology tends to be more pragmatic, more quantitative and more result-oriented. Danish museology, at least from my perspective, is more phenomenological, more creative and more qualitative, while the framework is theoretically visual culture focused on the *visual event*, i.e. the complex and rich interaction between the viewer and the viewed in the meaning-making process.

For obvious reasons, the cases presented predominantly stem from

stationary and temporary Danish exhibitions, thus giving them a unique, exotic element, just as anything that comes from a different culture bears its own special traits. Even in a globalised world, dialects exist determined by local circumstances. It is not without coincidence that the anthology I co-edited is called *New Danish Museology* and stresses the distinctive local Danish angle (Ingemann & Larsen 2005).

Note

1 This original contribution to the development of the methodological field of researching experience is called the *ReflexivityLab*.

**PART ONE
CONSTRUCTIONS
QUESTIONS**

any more.¹ This means that the text must recreate not only the mood and atmosphere of the exhibitions but also the rooms, the objects and the paintings in such a way that the reader has a meaningful experience.

The main goal of this collection of chapters is to present how the visitor, the viewer or the reader is constructed by means of the exhibition. Numerous elements comprise the totality of an exhibition, but the point of view of visitors begins upon entering the museum. John Falk tells a striking story about a little boy who accompanies his mother to a museum. She is eager to enter the museum and look at the exhibitions, but the boy wants to explore the museum shop, which he finds fascinating. Shaking him, she shouts in his face that they have to go into the museum immediately, but the boy looks at her and calmly says, “Mom, we *are* at the museum.”

Prior to arriving at the museum, our previous experiences have shaped us, not to mention our expectations based on what other people we trust have told us. Depending on the nature of the museum, e.g. whether it is a highly modern art gallery, a quiet historical museum or an exceedingly interactive science and technology museum, our preconceptions put us in a certain mood, but it is not until arriving at the actual exhibition that we get a true impression of what to expect.

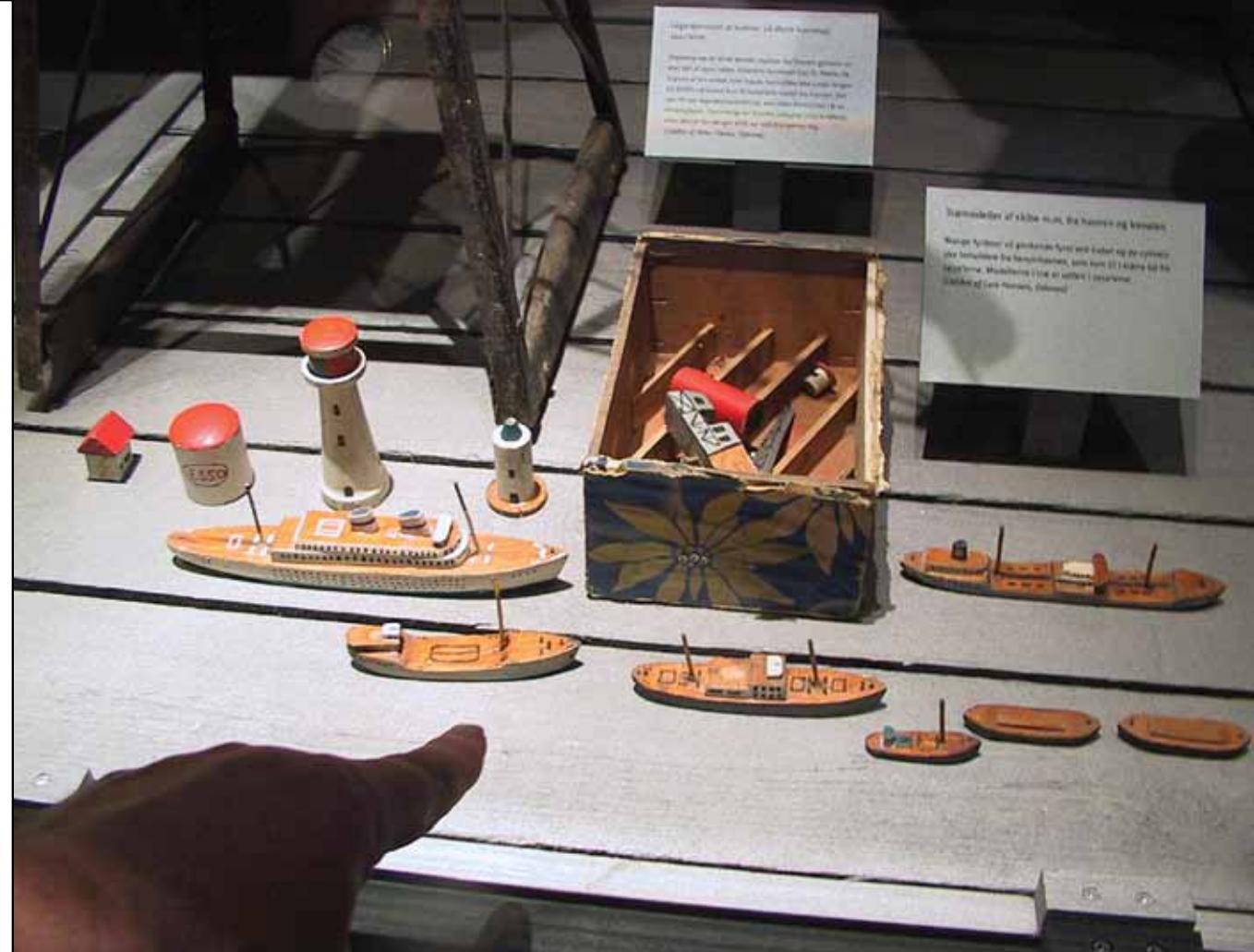
A tiny ship – the implied user

The presentation of the theme, the objects and the mediation creates an implied user and comprises certain expectations toward users concerning their knowledge, understanding and experiences of life and insights into social relationships as well as expectations regarding e.g. their openness and sense of empathy. It is possible to narrow down a whole exhibition into a single showcase and then further reduce it to just a few objects and their presentation. For example, at a special exhibition called *Harbour – Odense Docklands and Canal over 200 Years* at Møntergården, the cultural and urban history museum in Odense, Denmark, the caption on a box of tiny toy wooden ships and models stated [Ill. 1.1]:

Wooden model ships etc. from Odense port and canal.

Many residents will recognise the lighthouse at the entrance to the canal (Gabet) and the port’s cylindrical oil storage tanks, whose construction in large numbers began in the 1930s. The models were made in the 1950s. (On loan from Lars Hansen, Odense)

The Møntergård exhibition has one significant general feature, namely the considerable use of miniatures, with model ships as an item of particular interest. The brief analysis that follows is based on a showcase comprising scale models of ships at the port. One item is a beautiful and fascinating secret box containing a personal, handmade toy. There are six



Ill. 1.1: Wooden model ships etc. from Odense port and canal.

fairly large and small vessels as well as some buildings and lighthouses. Covered with paper patterned with large yellow flowers on a dark blue background, the box is slightly larger than an adult hand. Even though the paper looks trendy, the box is obviously worn, indicating that it is old and used. The exhibition designer has taken objects out of the box and lined them up in rows.

The rows consist of a variety of different ships, e.g. a large ship with three rows of portholes, some small tugboats and some slightly larger ships. But they are not ships, they are models of ships. Cultural researcher Susan Steward believes that models of this nature are basically nostalgic because they make everything small, so that the models create a representation of “... a product of alienated labour, a representation which itself is constructed of artisanal labour” (2003:58).

Steward points out that in real life ships are a result of the work of

many people under tightly controlled organisational circumstances under which the owner and manager have employees do the work. The converse is true of the model. Model makers produce the object with their own hands from start to finish.

Why exactly is it precisely these ships that have been made into models? A significant feature of the models is that they make a clear reference to Odense Harbour, as stated in the caption, “Many residents will recognise the lighthouse at the entrance to the canal (*Gabet*)”. Was Lars Hansen, the owner of the models, once the 10-year-old boy who played with the models back in the mid-1950s? Or did he make them recently as an elderly man? What is the role of the model maker in relation to Odense Harbour? Was he perhaps employed there as a dockworker, a shipbuilder or a customs officer?

Clearly toys, the model ships have just the right size for a child. They can be taken out of the box, placed on the floor and moved about to form a port. The model ships are a game that opens up the imagination of the players. As Steward explains, “The miniature becomes a stage on which we project, by means of association or intertextuality, a deliberately framed series of *actions*” (2003:54).

The ships provide a plethora of clues about how they were made. There are traces left from knife blades and chisels, as well as brushstrokes of white paint that indicate an inaccurate hand. The black brushstrokes used to represent windows and portholes are quick and sloppy, while the Esso logo on the petrol tank is handwritten instead of an exact replica. Scratched, the ships also show other signs of wear and tear from having been played with over and over again. They have been a good toy perhaps once actively used in the home and with playmates back in the 1950s. Although visitors might be curious to learn more, there only information provided is what is listed in the above caption.

In the context of the exhibition, the model ships have been transformed into two pieces of information specifically addressing people living in the area, namely that “many residents” will recognise the lighthouse at the entrance to the canal. Non-residents will not know whether it is the little lighthouse with the concave top or the big lighthouse with the roof. The caption then goes on to explain that the oil storage tanks are from the 1930s. Are they are still there? Have they remained completely unchanged? The focus is not the miniature items as a narrative but as topographic information. There is no statement in the caption indicating that the models of the lighthouses and the oil storage tanks were used for play and no effort has been made in the caption to evoke the joy of recognition in the viewer.

Psychologist John Dewey defines pure *recognition* as arrested perception. Dewey, who believes that recognition is a rudimentary perception because it ends with the recognition of stereotypes, writes:

Recognition is perception arrested before it has a chance to develop freely. In recognition there is a beginning of an act of perception. But this beginning is not allowed to serve the development of a full perception of the thing recognized. It is arrested at the point where it will serve some other purpose ... (1980/1934:52).

The multitude of other ships at the *Harbour – Odense Docklands and Canal over 200 Years* exhibition differs from the toy ships on loan from Lars Hansen because they are not toys. Hansen’s ships have no names or specific identities; they do not need to be individualised in order to play or the name can change depending on the game being played. The professionally built model ships, which have names like Iris Oe, Christian IX, Stevns Trader and St Knud, are more than just the typical schooner, steamer, coaster or tugboat. Beautiful, and highly detailed, the miniature models are replicas of the large ships upon which they are based. The level of detail leads viewers to imagine the shipyards that built them or the company that owned them. Thus, the model ships operate as *representations* of the big ships in port and at sea, evoking images of extensive production facilities or the large fleet of ships that once existed.

At a museum, miniatures are turned into something else (Baxandall 1991:36). They are not exact representations of the original objects, because if they were they would be too large to fit into the museum. Within the context of the museum, they are transformed into illustrations and pedagogical tools that indicate the size and nature of the different types of ships that have navigated the canal and Odense Harbour at various times. The recognisability of the models leads to arrested perception as defined by Dewey, preventing what he calls the development of a full perception of the thing recognised.

Although there is a contrast between the tiny ships built as toys and the professional models, both types of miniatures can bring to mind ideas about dominating and ruling the world. There is a sense of fascination either way with controlling and having power over the great and mighty, the channel, the harbour, the ships and the buildings, that make them *playful* and *powerful*.

From harbour, ships and signs to the Model Reader

Chapter 2 will expand on the above analysis, but the small part of the exhibition looked at will also be used here to illustrate the idea of the construction of the Model Reader or Model User. Exhibitions construct users and the expectations they must live up to. Users of the small part of the exhibition described above must be highly pragmatic and playful. The toy ships and related items bring to mind a specific lighthouse at a specific site, but this recognition is only possible if the users are local and

have the necessary knowledge. Outsiders do not experience this phase of recognition.

In 1979, Italian semiotician Umberto Eco developed the idea of the Model Reader as the conscious and unconscious result of an author's endeavours:

To organize a text, its author has to rely upon a series of codes that assign given contents to the expressions he uses. To make his text communicative the author has to assume that the ensemble of codes he relies upon is the same as that shared by his possible reader. The author has thus to foresee the model for the possible reader (hereafter Model Reader) supposedly able to deal interpretatively with the expressions in the same way as the author deals generatively with them. (Eco 1984:7).

Eco underlines that the strategies in producing the Model Reader are partly textual, involving choosing, "... a specific linguistic code, of a certain literary style, and of specific specialization-indices." But also by more media-specific choices such as typography and design elements and images – and very importantly, "Many texts make evident their Model Reader by implicitly presupposing a specific encyclopaedic competence" (Eco 1984:7).

According to Eco's formulation, talking about strategies in producing a Model Reader indicates that it is or must be a conscious decision the author makes, but Eco also believes that whenever an author writes a text with a purpose, there is perhaps also an unconscious construction of a Model Reader. His idea is that by being aware of the approach of the Model Reader, the authors become more conscious about the content of their communication.

Applying Eco's approach to museums and exhibitions, the concepts behind the Model Reader can also be used to talk about the Model Visitor or the Model User. The term *Model User* is preferable because of the various elements involved at an exhibition, e.g. walking around the objects on display; visual input such as wall colour, showcases, photographs, drawings, iconography and objects; interactive media and screens with sound and moving images; text and labels. These features all work together to form an idiolect encompassing what the exhibition covers, i.e. the theme, content and approach, which in themselves are part of the creative strategy that constructs the Model User. The content of an exhibition, often related to a specific era, is frequently conceptualised from a fairly academic field of research such as art history or history, or it stems from an archaeological or ethnological perspective.

Eco's concept of the Model Reader goes beyond limited strategic terms such as target group or target segments and can work as a gateway

for understanding the multifarious dissemination of information that takes place at an exhibition. Chapter 24 examines this way of thinking further, looking at it from a production-oriented perspective.

At museums, cultural heritage and personal memory are important. From a psychological perspective, the two major aspects of personality – emotion and memory – are linked together:

The memories we tell ourselves and tell to others inform us about ourselves when we attend to the emotions they generate in us and notice the recurring themes of what matters to us most now and before. They provide us with two great important sources of information: they teach us about the outcome of goals we might pursue (cognitive input) and at the same time they remind us what it would feel like to attain these goals (emotional input). No other source of information processed by the mind provides us such complex input in such a palatable form (Singer, Jefferson & Salovey 1993:ix).

Combining Eco's structuralist, semiotic approach with a psychological view of emotion and memory expands the concept of the Model User to include a lifeworld perspective (Schutz 1967). An exhibition taps both the personal memory of visitors as well as the collective memory by helping them translate their experiences into language.

Talking about an event is 'a form of rehearsal that may aid memory' because talking or translating an experience into language, seen as the social mechanism guiding memories, can help to organize and assimilate the event in people's mind (Pennebaker & Banasik 1997:8).

Often, memories that are believed to be personal are not and that which is remembered is frequently mediated knowledge whose source has been lost, but that nevertheless has become part of one's own memory. Understanding the meaning of a picture or seeing it in the same way as someone else is the result of shared experiences, schooling and other similarities; in short, this phenomenon is what Schutz calls, "growing old together" (1967: 163, 177). Misztal explains that, "... much of what we seem to 'remember' and what we assume to be our personal memories we have not actually experienced personally" (2003:76).

The central point is that this exhibition analysis shows that constructing a Model User with the necessary competences to decode and relate to an exhibition at a museum is possible. The analysis demonstrates that the competences are related to:

- style and genre of the expression
- media-specific elements
- specific encyclopedic knowledge
- professional fields
- emotion and memory fields
- mediated experiences and knowledge.

Narrativity – a necessity

The analysis of the tiny toy ships is an example of analysing from the Model User perspective, but it is also more, it is a narrative. There is a beginning, a middle and an end, just as there is in any kind of narrative. According to American cognition and learning researcher Jerome Bruner, people use two different strategies to understand their daily world:

There are two modes of cognitive functioning, two modes of thought, each providing distinctive ways of ordering experience, of constructing reality. The two (though complementary) are irreducible to one another ... One mode, the paradigmatic or logico-scientific one, attempts to fulfil the ideal of a formal, mathematical system of description and explanation. It employs categorization or conceptualization and the operations by which categories are established, instantiated, idealized, and related one to the other to form a system ... The imaginative application of the narrative mode leads instead to good stories, gripping drama, believable (though not necessarily “true”) historical accounts. It deals in human or human-like intention and action and the vicissitudes and consequences that mark their course (1986:11-13).

The intention of Model Users is to create believable accounts, as Bruner puts it when talking about the application of the narrative mode. American psychologist Donald Polkinghorne stresses that meaning construction primarily involves looking for coherence in events:

Because narrative is one of the operations of the realm of meaning, an explicit examination of this realm will aid in the understanding of the narrative. First, the realm of meaning is not a thing or substance, but an activity ... The primary dimension of an activity is time, and the sequence in which the parts of action happen can be decisive in defining what kind of activity it is (1988:4).

Bruner and Polkinghorne look at narratives as a foundation for the users’ construction of meaning and as a natural way for people to understand their lifeworld and activities. This means that museums and exhibitions are also places where narrativity is inevitably displayed from the

perspective of users and must also be reflected in the curator’s structure and organisation of the exhibition.

In the exhibition analysis this leads to a focus on the structure of user visits at the museum and the actual exhibition. The narrative structure can be delimited, for example by the beginning and the end of an exhibition visit. The following two questions can be addressed when describing the narrative: How is the visitor met by the exhibition? What kind of framing and approach are used to present the main theme? This leads the user to ask what the question in this exhibition? When users exit an exhibition, the aim is for them to leave feeling there was a common thread. Were the initial promises and expectations established in the beginning met? Answers provided and issues elaborated upon?

The narrative structure of a novel can be seen as being more coherent than it is in an exhibition. The reading situation is utterly different. Normally, someone who reads a novel starts on page one and ends on the last page, while the “reader”, or user, at an exhibition does not just move linearly. The user, who can be quite selective and even rude at times to fellow patrons, can zigzag in various directions, jump around and pick up a fragment here and there. Users construct their own narrative if not guided effectively by the opening.

The approach of an exhibition analysis to the situation is much different than the one an ordinary visitor takes because with the former, more time and effort are spent getting as close to the narrative of the exhibition as possible. Due to the often enormous number of objects, showcases, screens, films, text and design at an exhibition, it is necessary to narrow down an analysis to three or four points of impact, preferably ones that elicit emotions such as irritation, joy or confusion.

Narrative – and telling

The narrative is as important as the analytical gaze in that it reconstructs the experience of the exhibition for the reader of the analysis. Language transforms the complexity of the exhibition into words and a text makes what is familiar interesting and what is strange or weird more familiar.

The aim of the exhibition analysis is to create a common language that makes it possible to understand and communicate with others in the field and to add to the field insights that can be applied to create a more successful meeting between users and an exhibition. Dutch cultural theorist Mieke Bal points out how the nature of dialogue can be compared to the dynamics of an exhibition:

Conversations and dialogues are specific social events of a predominantly but not exclusively discursive nature, consisting of activities occurring in a particular time and place between people acting as

subjects. Perhaps it is illuminating to view exhibitions as such events (1996:82).

The five exhibitions – and reviews

The following exhibition analysis covers five rather different exhibitions that nonetheless share a common feature in that I either experienced a coincidence or something that provoked me or irritated me at the exhibition. French semiotician Roland Barthes distinguishes between *studium* and *punctum* in a discussion of his interest in studying photographs. One of his reasons for doing so is to become informed:

It is by *studium* that I am interested in so many photographs, whether I receive them as political testimony or enjoy them as good historical scenes: for it is culturally (this connotation is present in *studium*) that I participate in the figures, the faces, the gestures, the settings, the actions (2000:26).

Barthes goes on to identify another aspect that wakes his interest and that is a highly personal interruption of *studium*:

... it is this element which rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me ... This second element which will disturb the *studium* I shall therefore call *punctum*; for *punctum* is also: sting, speck, cut, little hole – and also a cast of the dice. A photograph's *punctum* is that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me) (2000:26-27).

The *punctum* that Barthes describes is highly personal but can also apply as the criterion for selecting the three or four points of impact that stand out distinctly in an exhibition. In my analysis, the selection of the points of impact goes beyond the personal to encompass something prototypical for an entire exhibition or for similar exhibitions in general.

Focusing on the construction of the Model User, the narrative mode of understanding and the *punctum* underline my interest in what a specific exhibition does to address user and how this process takes place. Consequently, this exhibition analysis differs from ordinary reviews, which generally aim shed light on the intentions of the curators, often in an attempt to put the review within the framework of art history and in an attempt to evaluate what was good and bad about an exhibition.

Chapter 2 - The safe harbour – How an exhibition constructs the user

This chapter, which focuses on a temporary exhibition at the city

museum in Odense, Denmark, on the history of the local harbour,² looks at the exhibition in question as a prototype for similar history museum exhibitions. The aim of this chapter is to uncover the exhibition's secrets and expose hidden codes and stories in an attempt to present a more generalised idea about how to talk about and analyse the relationships between the user of an exhibition and the actual exhibition. The relationship between the realm of possibilities in the exhibition and the framework of possibilities for the user is apparently exceedingly strong and stimulating.

Chapter 3 - The human aspect in ancient times

This chapter is closely connected to the following chapter in that the analysis is also based on the National Museum of Denmark, the country's largest museum of cultural history. The museum covers the Stone, Bronze and Iron Ages, all of which form the foundation of Denmark's centuries' old monarchy. But is the exhibition examined only about objects made of stone, bronze or iron?

Exposed to new ways of looking at a well-established exhibition, I was led to ask the question: Are there people at the exhibition on ancient times at the National Museum of Denmark? There are of course the visitors. But what about the traces of ancient people and the relationships they may have had with each other? These questions will be addressed in the analysis of a single display case on the Vikings and connected to the wide range of mediated images and stories about ancestors.

Chapter 4 - The hidden exhibition – The new prehistory exhibition at the National Museum in Copenhagen

This chapter deals with the same exhibition as the one in Chapter 3, which looks closely at a single showcase as a prototypical example of the presentation of objects and narratives that successfully engages visitors. The old exhibition has been taken down and rebuilt from scratch, opening up the opportunity to present Danish prehistory in new and unique ways. In analysing the whole exhibition space, I have chosen three areas of impact that show the approach the curators and designers chose to pursue talking to visitors. The focus on scenography and narrativity reveals an exhibition that is rather problematic from the perspective of the user.

Chapter 5 - Mise-en-scène – One artist constructing himself retrospectively into the future

In this chapter we visit a retrospective exhibition on a famous Danish painter and look at how the whole *mise-en-scène* constructs the artist and the visitor. We are highly open to finding traces, cues and leitmotifs that can help us see possible unarticulated arguments that block

the impact of the exhibition as a whole. The role of the dissemination is unfolded and questioned as to whether it opens or reduces the artist and his various and fascinating paintings, photographs and installations. For visitors without prior knowledge of the artist, the exhibition comes across as a mix between a public fair and a department store.

Chapter 6 - The forced gazes: Home, shop, museum and IKEA

In its most banal form our visual existence takes place in a most familiar way, namely in the family home, e.g. in the living room. This chapter is based on two different rooms. One a living room in a bungalow as represented in an exhibition at the National Museum of Denmark called *Stories of Denmark 1660-2000*. The other one is a contemporary living room as presented in an IKEA store display in June 2007 in Copenhagen. Photographs, though not a target of the analysis, are used to look at these two rooms in a different way. The idea is to challenge and explore the physical space to interpret what it says about our visual existence as presented in the two exhibitions. Photographs support the dual purpose of the analytical approach, which is to look at the retail store from a museological perspective and the museum exhibition from a business perspective. In the visual culture field, the focus moves from the image itself to choice of perspective, thereby providing the materiality something social and personal.

The last two chapters in the first theme move the exhibition analysis into a broader realm by adding two approaches. In chapter 5, which is on a retrospective exhibition of an artist, the analysis is preformed in a dialogue between two people with different professional competences, namely visual communication and art history. The focus is not so much on how the visitor is constructed but on what possible leitmotifs and cues are laid out in the overall construction of the artist. Examining the possibilities shows how the Model User is let down.

In chapter 6, which looks at living room displays in IKEA and a museum exhibition, the use of photography in the form of two photographs adds a new aesthetic dimension and mode of representation to the foundation of the analysis. The concept of the forced gaze transforms what is intimately familiar in the living rooms into disturbing ambivalences, interstices and places of resistance.

Notes

- 1 One exception is an exhibition on Danish prehistory at the National Museum of Denmark, where a 1970's sitting room is also on display.
- 2 Harbour – Odense Docklands and Canal over 200 years

Chapter 2: The safe harbour – How an exhibition constructs the user

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Through a combination of objects, pictures and text an exhibition creates a unifying design with broad and narrow opportunities for the objects to tell stories. An exhibition creates an identity based on its theme, while the objects, people and institutions involved are actors in the exhibition's narrative.

Exhibitions also create an image of exhibition users based on the competences an exhibition expects visitors to have or to acquire through its representations. Thus the *Model User* is both a theoretical and an analytical construction that reflects the strategies an exhibition designer intends the user to apply. Hopefully the strategies are intended to help the user create a coherent narrative from the many components in the exhibit. The pragmatic reception analysis subsequently becomes a tool for creating a framework for analysing two key elements: users and exhibitions.

Users are presented with a variety of story options that are not only interesting, but that allow the viewer, in an informal learning space, to enter into or construct a narrative.

Encountering the harbour

Five 12-year-old boys come running noisily along the mock gangway and stop up at the end of the room; they see something that fascinates them and exclaim, “Look, the soft drink cans are completely pressed together into a square” – only to run off through the rooms until they reach a room with photographs and models of a residential area where one boy calls out, “I’ve lived there. It was absolutely dreadful. I could never find our house because they all looked the same!”

An old man walks slowly and cautiously along the gangway right past most items until stopping at the end of the exhibition to look at the numerous paintings in gilded frames hanging on the wall, after which he exits the exhibition.

Did the boys and the old man actually see the same exhibition? What do viewers actually do with an exhibition? The old man passes all of the objects, photographs and maps before stopping at the rather topological paintings. He stands there, obviously touched by what he sees. His views them from an aesthetic perspective, perhaps searching for a surprise element, but the sheer conventional nature of the amateur paintings fails to astonish, so he has to be satisfied with a more pragmatic approach and be content with recognising the local areas the paintings portray, perhaps giving him a feeling of nostalgia by bringing back the good old days. He knows something about the present and he knows something about the past and he can combine both time and space into an appraisal of what matters to him.

It is enough. He did not experience anything surprising, but what he did experience was authentic and personal.

Totally indifferent to the old paintings the five boys look for something they can identify with. They bypass all that old stuff to find the newest and the coolest items, namely the beer and soft drink cans crushed unmercifully into a solid metal cube measuring about a half a meter tall. The metal has been forcefully mutilated and transformed.

They boys also feel a sense of recognition. Photographs of worker homes in the part of town called *Skibshuskvarteret* have houses one boy recognises, but his familiarity with them brings out a strong reaction of discomfort. His response transforms the experience and attitudes of the other four boys. He becomes an obstacle to having a shared experience. He takes on the role of personal guide, showing them into the special universe the objects and images in the exhibition reflect. He can help his peers identify with his response because they can relate to him as one of them. Moreover he is conferred authority and the force of interpretation because he has personal insight into the content of this part of the exhibition because he used to live in one of the areas pictured. The boy is also a good communicator because he speaks their language, intuitively recognising what is good for them to know and experience.



III. 2.1: The encounter between the objects in the room and the user's response create the exhibition.

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question then is why does it matter how an exhibition begins or what the teaser is like?

A recurring feature in the analysis of the safe harbour is an exploration of how the exhibition constructs its Model User and partly a quest for how the exhibition creates one or more narratives.

Can the invisible become visible?

The teaser at the beginning of the exhibition embodies the crucial values at stake and which later appear in the exhibition. The teaser also introduces the theme of the invisible [Ill. 2.2].

Work to dig the channel and Odense harbour began in approximately 1800 and took 10 years to complete. The work was mainly carried out by foreign workers comprising more than 300 men brought in from Holstein and Schleswig in Germany. The exhibition's introductory text states that the, "... large work crew that dug and pumped for years did not leave many traces".

A pair of large old work boots, an old shovel, a worn out wheelbarrow and some old floorboards are displayed below the text. In contrast to all the other objects in the exhibition, there is no specific indication of e.g. what these items are or where they come from. Probably because they are simply a *visualisation* of the hard work that took place and of what is invisible. This display is appropriate in a cultural historical museum that emphasises material culture and in this case it is the workers and the non-material property for which no trace has been left behind. With 300 or more men present in an area for over ten years, one obvious conclusion is that they might have left something highly tangible behind – children, grandchildren and subsequent generations.

The texts in the exhibition highly praise the enormous job carried out by anonymous workers: "... they and the colossal amount of digging they did deserves to be remembered". The visible part also belongs to the dockers, whose only remaining artefacts are the many children they left behind.

The tone of the texts marks the distinction between the others and us. Between ordinary middle-class citizens and the others; between a stable, controlled life and chaos. The part of the exhibition describing dockworkers explains, "Today goings-on at Restaurant Sprogø awaken memories of the lively and, for some, scary environment that existed here up until the 1960s".

The exhibition also indicates that large wagon trains of travellers and people "... who did not live a normal bourgeois life" called the port home. The various colourful environments represent a challenge for the exhibition that it certainly does not take up, but that it nevertheless makes an attempt to address.

People's objects are preserved and exhibited as well. For example

there is an optimistic story about the fraternal fish society and its amusing ballot box, not to mention a description of their annual drunken fishing trip. This story reflects an atmosphere that is far from the lively, scary environment found at Restaurant Sprogø. The respectable, bourgeois elements of life are visible not only in the preserved objects, but also shine through the overall design of the exhibition, which is beautifully designed aesthetically and uses a colour scale ranging from dark gray to silver, sharply accented with a glaringly bright greenish yellow.

The exhibition is nice, orderly and proper. Visitors enter the exhibition on a gangway painted gray and green with greenish yellow warning stripes, but it all looks so new. There are no oil stains, no soil and dirt, no scratches or cracks in the wood, no wear and tear etc. There is nothing that marks the "invisible" anonymous workers who walked and worked tirelessly and pulled and lifted and lost. There is no uncertainty. There is no trace of their existence. Thus 'we' represents the bourgeois or those in possession of civic virtues and 'they' represents the invisible but also what is colourful and dangerous. By talking to visitors, the exhibition - the Harbour - brings us into a safe harbour.

Does Odense have a harbour?

Believing that the town lies too far inland, unenlightened tourists are surprised to find that Odense has a harbour, especially because there is a steel shipyard by the sea in nearby Lindø, which does not influence Odense. Tourists wonder where exactly the harbour is in Odense. This is the first riddle the exhibition puts forward - and its answers.

From the pragmatic reception theoretical framework one seeks as a visitor and user based on the themes, traces and signs in an exhibition, the visitor/user has the opportunity to link them together to create a coherent interpretation universe. At the same time the exhibition constructs a number of narratives through objects, texts, photographs, maps, designs and paths through the various rooms. It is this complex material universe I must interact with and explore. I have the role of a *highly* interested observer who would like to understand what I am being met with and what the museum wants me to experience.

From the beginning I am sympathetically disposed to the entire museum, which has dared to remove what numerous other local historical museums tend to exhibit, e.g. traces of local history from antiquity until the Second World War or up to the present. Always in chronological order. The topic here is narrower: HARBOUR! And covers a time span limited to two hundred years. This is also a temporary one-year exhibition, leading me to suppose that this museum has an active, modern exhibition policy based on the premise that a museum is not somewhere you visit just once in a lifetime, but a place that regularly presents new and different exhibitions. What an exciting prospect.

1806-1904-1965

The exhibition has no fewer than three teasers that cover 'the invisible', the code 1806-1904-1965 and 'the future'.

Approaching the exhibition from a narrative theoretical starting point means that the main characters introduced, the conflict and the progression of the narrative are of interest.

One significant drawback with the first teaser involving the invisible is that the main characters initially appear almost exclusively in the exhibition's introduction and basically do not reappear later. The user attempts to create cohesion by looking for conflicts or emotions that can underpin the invisible as the main characters. For example the dockworkers' own stories of uncertainty and degeneration could have been told. At least there is a red flag from the trade-union movement. Teasers can be viewed as specific details that provide a summary of key themes. Teasers can be a carefully selected object or a single text addressing the core of the story. One familiar approach to films is applying commonsense understanding by decoding or attempting to decode the unknown through known codes. If this fails, the visitors/viewers will begin hunting for new codes, a step that can create a bridge or open a small hatch or push a giant gate ajar to what is new.

The code 1806-1904-1965 presents a highly interesting puzzle. On the most banal level, they probably represent years, but why precisely these years? What is the user being asked to recall in relation to the history of Denmark? Was Copenhagen bombarded and humiliatingly defeated in 1806 by the British? What about 1904, which covers neither the World War I nor the reunification of South Jutland? Does 1965 have something to do with the Cuban Missile Crisis and the Cold War? Certainly they are not referring to 1968 and everything it produced? Finally, the question can be asked as to why 2003, which would mark a 200th anniversary, is not included on the list.²

The previously mention boys and the old man perhaps never noticed this puzzle or were not interested in it. A riddle must also be interesting and relevant. Eco believes the readers or viewers have a philosophical duty to understand a text as it was conceived or at least as they are able to meet it. This is the approach that I plan to employ to break the code.

The code is revealed in four different ways in one assembled installation. There is a green card with something blue on it showing how the canal was dug from the small town of Stige to Odense. The first map shows how the area looked in 1806 and the second one shows how the channel changed and was expanded in 1904, while the third map indicates the changes in 1965. The second part of the code is presented by each year in the form of three miniature ship models illustrating the types of ships used to navigate the channel and harbour at the time. Information is consequently added about the depth and the width of the



Ill. 2.3: The three years are presented using four types of codes. The first one is a sail upon which drawings, photographs and paintings from the period are projected. The next one is a pallet loaded with selected commodities and goods typically transported by ship. The third code comprises three model ships that illustrate the size, type and name of the ships used. The fourth one is a display showing a map of the channel and harbour accompanied by an explanation.

channel and the port, which naturally were expanded over time to allow larger ships to enter the harbour. The third part of the code is presented using a pallet carrying goods typically transported by ship for one of the three years, for instance the metal square of compressed beer and soft drink cans the boys were so fascinated by. The fourth part of the code is presented on a stylised sail upon which drawings and photographs are projected showing work at the canal and the port. The big room where the three installations are located is filled with port sounds from the different time periods.

The well-made model ships and prototypical goods are fascinating, but they are not reflected in the code, which is apparently made up of a random selection of years. The theme of the invisible has already receded and knowing anything about the three years appears to be irrelevant,

leaving the user to assume that the years are probably not especially significant.

The third teaser comes late at the close of the exhibition. The hidden year or time, namely the present and the near future, are suddenly apparent. In the last big room of the exhibition, the design and contact have undergone changes. The gray and silver tones accented with a glaring greenish yellow are gone. In this room, where everything suddenly becomes white and architecturally styled, users enter a new visual and linguistic code, namely the planning and architectural displays and models. Users enter an unfamiliar room filled with designs for architectural competitions and where future ideas are presented and discussed. Plans for the future of Odense Harbour are on view. Users are addressed as political citizens and told about dreams and visions.

As a visitor, I am convinced that this teaser makes the exhibition highly topical and relevant. I do not live in Odense, but the exhibition clearly increasingly targets the city's inhabitants, who are friendly but rather frightened by what is new and unfamiliar. The political future angle updates the exhibition. What if the exhibition were reversed and started with a completely different question such as, "What should happen to Odense Harbour?" – then many things would fall into place. The exhibition would have a clear, pronounced utility value that would go beyond the traditional history of the development of the port. The exhibition would look at the existing buildings in the port from more than the traditional angle, which generally focuses on beauty and aesthetics. As the exhibition catalogue states, "The large concrete silos are perhaps not beautiful in the classical sense, but the geometric shapes and large building masses offer their own beauty."

Unfortunately, the current exhibition does not make this approach possible.

When objects are gathered by design

Even though exhibition design is a mixture of aesthetics, function and technique, this is not how we experience it. Users generally tend to respond emotionally, their reactions ranging from irritation and confusion to happiness and feelings of comfort. They sense what is happening and react without necessarily being able to articulate what the source of their emotional reactions is. How the design is experienced shapes the users' overall experience of an exhibition. For example, it rapidly becomes clear whether something is cool and modern or old-fashioned and out-of-date. Taste, however, is not innate, but rather a learned part of one's cultural repertoire.

An anecdotal story about a weekly magazine in Denmark illustrates what good design is. In the 1970s when Danish author Paul Hammerich completely redesigned a magazine and gave it an elegant new design, the



Ill. 2.4: Branding irons with the numbers $\frac{1}{2}$, 5, 3 and $\frac{1}{4}$ hang decoratively in front of the documents and engravings.

circulation numbers plummeted. Circulation rebounded however when the design was again messy and chaotic, similar to that of supermarket leaflets with a plethora of colours, images and text at odd angles. The new editor explained that the impetus behind the magazine's new identity was that it must resemble the homes it appeared in.

If considered from a Bourdieuan perspective, what does the harbour exhibition look like? Certainly not the low style of popular weekly magazines. It looks like highly stylised advertising. Taste is about more than just aesthetics; it's about inclusion and exclusion. While at an exhibition, unless there are familiar aspects and the user feels embraced, then the feeling of being expelled and excluded can arise. Feeling included makes users a part of what Stanley Fish (1980) calls the *interpretive community* and allows them to appreciate e.g. the simple, elegant and raw design.

Regardless of the inclusionary and exclusionary signs an exhibition design presents, a clear and thorough design approach can unify, and on

a surface level, make a 'poorly structured exhibition appear comprehensive and targeted. This is the strength and weakness of design. Visitors however cannot be fooled. Even if they experience clarity, the exhibition will seem irrelevant if it does not go deeper than the aesthetics, which is the lowest level of experience when trying to create meaning.

Users who spend an extended amount of time at an exhibition will discover many astute and thoughtful details. For example, at the harbour exhibition, I discover that the three years also function as a design tool in that each topic always had three drawings or photographs selected according to the three years, thus providing a contrastive history.

The material culture

Plain and simply, exhibitors can display what they have, but they cannot display what they do not have. When this is the case, cultural history museums face a fundamental challenge if they look at objects as the only crucial element of an exhibition. Eva Persson (1994), an extremely experienced Swedish exhibition producer, thinks that objects can either stand alone, stand in contrast to another object or being linked by similarity to another object. Museum manager John Hennigar Shuh believes that, "One of the major advantages is that most people are capable of being fascinated by 'things.'" (1999:81). Reasonably, Shuh sees believes in the potential of this fascination because he knows that people are not wildly enthusiastic about seeing the endless number of objects they encounter in daily life. He believes that museums have a unique ability to focus viewer attention on an object and that the object has a story to tell if people are able to listen.

Simply appearing in a museum showcase is apparently not enough; someone also needs to ask the right questions to help the spectator and the objects create a story together. But is this what happens at Odense exhibition?

The heading in one showcase reads, "Port and channel management", causing viewers to rightly guess that the showcase contains a variety of papers, forms and books about the port and channel. There are also 30 cm-long iron objects with an inverted 4, 8, ¼, ½, 5 and 3 written on the ends. They are beautifully and decoratively hung on an imaginary axis. A brief text explains that they are branding irons used by customs officials.

When Shuh believes that museums can focus visitor attention on an object I become attentive, but I also get disappointed. Shuh, who would have been a great companion during my visit, has written an article in which he uses a Big Mac Styrofoam box to wonderfully show how questions can prompt viewers to look at one object in fifty different ways (1999).

In an attempt to decipher the numbers 4, 8, ¼, ½, 5 and 3, I try

to link them to 1806, 1904 and 1965, but some numbers are missing. I wonder why exactly these numbers were chosen. Were 1, 2, 6, 7, 9 and especially 0 not needed? Are the numbers selected aesthetically beautiful in some way? Finally, why are the numbers placed in this particular order? I wonder what the branding irons were used for and whether the numbers represent a date or an invoice number or anything imaginable.

My point is that the objects in the Odense exhibition do not create the kind of attention described by Shuh in that no surprising story is told through them. Yes, I can read that smuggling was widespread, but no specific story emerges containing exciting details such as how the items were smuggled, who smuggled them or what customs officials did to counteract the problem. The branding iron would have been an ideal artefact to use as a starting point for explaining customs clearance procedures. Writing this analysis requires me to reflect on my experience to gain an understanding of my initial feelings of disappointment toward objects whose stories remained silent.

While I was at the Odense exhibition a Spanish couple came walking by with their two 10-12-year-old children. They could not understand the signs, which were in Danish only, so they just went around the rooms slowly. Then they stopped because they had caught sight of my advanced digital camera sitting on a windowsill. The couple's son began carefully looking at it and they all talked eagerly together. Finally, an object they could relate to and allocate possible stories.

Learning and fun

Catching the right punch line in terms of experience and meaning construction at a museum is easy, especially within the framework of constructivist learning theory. People form their own individual opinions and carry their knowledge and feelings with them, drawing whatever they can out of the objects and texts in an exhibition.

Is this the way it should be or is this a sign of laziness? The director of a major museum once said that if visitors recognise an object at a museum because it looks like something their grandmother had, then they have benefitted from the museum's exhibition. This approach is rather un-ambitious and also represents a misguided understanding of constructivist learning theory. If a narrator, sender or museum has no goals about what they do then they might as well find something else to do.

Falk and Dierking have two fundamental notions about why people go to museums and what they get out of doing so. First, visitors expect museums to be an informal learning space that is, and this is key, also fun (2000:72). Second, people go because the learning is contextualised. According to the second notion, learning takes place through more than just the objects, images and texts appearing in the context of the exhibition. There is also the context the viewer brings or adds and the con-

text possibly created from viewer knowledge and experiences outside the museum environment (Falk & Dierking 2000:32). Viewed as a dialectical game – the overall design of the exhibition creates a series of *cues*, which easily allow drawing connections to the world outside the museum - and which motivate the visitor to establish the possible relations to the world outside the museum (Gjedde & Ingemann 2008: 49-74 & 75-98).

The Odense exhibition mainly only makes it possible to create connections that are topographical and factual with the available pictures and models, which are anchored through the text as objects and recognisable locations. The connections are rather weak because the richest relationships are those which Falk and Dierking call, “... an emotional, cognitive, and psychomotor learning experience, a learning experience that was rich enough to be transferable to a new situation” (2000:23). They emphatically conclude that, “Contrary to popular belief, there is no evidence that visitors come to museums either to learn or to have fun; ... visitors come both to learn and to have fun. The individuals who choose to go to the museum seek a learning-oriented entertainment experience” (2000:87). Falk and Dierking’s examples of a good combination of learning/play involve children’s museums, where learners have more autonomy and control over their own learning (2000:187) and where psychomotor tasks allow them to become involved emotionally by testing things.

The question at the harbour exhibit is whether visitors have both autonomy and control. On an abstract level, every exhibition naturally leaves the selection and control to the visitor. On the practical level it does not happen because the producer of the exhibition has excluded something and included something else which I as the visitor cannot relate to. On a practical level objects, texts, themes and structures are used and presented that provide many or only a few opportunities to create a cognitive, emotional and physical relationship to the exhibition to share with the world outside the museum and the visitor’s knowledge and memory. The harbour exhibition fails to embrace the emotional and physical aspects, leaving almost only pure cognitive relationships. Knowledge can be gained, but it is a knowledge that resembles what can be gleaned from a traditional textbook instead of a genre-specific museum with an educational/playful approach. Knowledge is acquired, but no questions are posed; there are answers but no tantalising puzzles. There are objects, but no stories behind the objects.

New categories

I ask myself the question as to why this otherwise so apparently nicely designed exhibition falls apart for the visitor. There is a lack of relevance for me as a visitor and a lack of narrative drive that elevates the experience beyond that of dusty artefacts. There is not anything wrong with

the objects themselves, but rather the exhibition structure and the way the individual components are categorised. The headings are sedate, lack imagination and have no power, e.g. Port and channel management; Port and city; Shipbuilding in Odense - Lind Hansen’s shipyard; N.F. Hansen’s shipyard; Odense Steel shipyard; Work and life on the harbour; From middle-class excursion spot to working-class neighbourhood; Dreams for the port.

In an attempt to further pinpoint what is lacking in the harbour exhibition, I apply six questions involving a variety of categories and structures that were used by a different museum in a completely different location. The only change is that I have replaced the word ‘art’ in the list below with the word ‘harbour’.

How does harbour conceal and reveal secret knowledge?

How does harbour mark physical and social boundaries?

How does harbour express the secrets held by each gender?

How does harbour identify the owners of secret knowledge?

How does harbour transmit secret knowledge?

Can we ever really understand another culture’s secrets?

(Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004:576)

Replacing the word ‘art’ with ‘harbour’ allows one to imagine a completely different and much more investigative exhibition that demands something from the viewer. There are many aspects of what is hidden and secret that could be explored, for example harbour wild life, the colourful people and the invisible. In the Odense exhibition these topics failed to become real like people of flesh and blood or to have clearly defined values and attitudes. The exhibition does not live up to the old adage “Don’t explain it, show it!” Although the harbour exhibition is appealing, there are too many objects that are not part of a meaningful narrative.

Seeing an exhibition

Using a phenomenological approach and following Husserl’s challenge to “go to the case itself”, my starting point is the practical experience and letting the experience determine the choice of theories.³ This method means that not all exhibitions can be analysed in a similar way because they raise different questions when looked at closely. Consequently I chose to introduce some fundamental issues using at least three different methodological approaches. In employing a pragmatic reception theoretical approach I applied Umberto Eco’s theory of the Model User to extract the semiotic traces that directly and indirectly talk about and to the visitor and to examine how the exhibition and its objects, pictures, texts and design construct the user.⁴ The second pragmatic approach, based on Bruner’s theory of narrative understanding, involved examining the

exhibition's *narrative* structure in relation to the ability of visitors to create meaning by generating their own narrative. This meant using a simple structure - a beginning, a middle and an end - that has been around since the time of Aristotle. This makes it essential to look at the teaser of the story as the input and the framework created for us to find meaning in the "... murk of chaotic experience" (Bruner 1990:56).

The third approach is the learning theory based on Falk and Dierking's theory of informal learning spaces, with emphasis on a good combination between learning and play and thus opportunities for emotional and physical experiences. The consistent feature of the analysis lies in the beholder. It is the visitors, viewers, readers and users who construct their own exhibition and the museum and the exhibition offer a number of aids to make this possible.

Notes

- 1 Harbour – Odense Docklands and Canal over 200 years
- 2 I visited the exhibition in Odense in 2003.
- 3 "It is not necessary with a claim to see with your own eyes, however, it is important not to interpret what is seen away because of biased thought coercion" (Husserl 1987:61)
- 4 The pragmatic reception analysis starts with the 'text' and not the real user of the exhibition or the intention the museum or its curators had. It is "the thing itself" that is examined.

Chapter 3

The human aspect in ancient times

The analysis in this chapter involves an exhibition at the National Museum of Denmark, the country's largest museum of cultural history. The museum covers the Stone, Bronze and Iron Ages, all of which form the foundation of Denmark's centuries' old monarchy. But is the exhibition examined only about objects made of stone, bronze or iron? Although it dates mainly from the 1970s, the exhibition underwent some changes and development in the early 1990s. There are fascinating objects, but the most striking aspect was the interest and focus in the late 1990s on museum visitors and users. Exposed to new ways of looking at a well-established exhibition, I was led to ask the question: Are there people at the exhibition on ancient times at the National Museum of Denmark? There are of course the visitors. But what about the traces of ancient people and the relationships they may have had with each other?

The set up in the showcase comprises two red figures on a white background [Ill. 3.1] and four swords and two axe heads floating in mid-air. The bottom of the showcase is filled with stones, upon which lie two additional swords and four axe heads. We are in the Viking Age. The coarse visual representation of two people clearly creates a relationship between them via an action. Perhaps they are two warriors who will fight to the death or perhaps they are friends practicing their skills as warriors.

Pictorially they appear as silhouettes on a neutral background with no indication of where they are except for the rocks at the bottom of the showcase. Perhaps they are on a beach that is unfamiliar territory for one of them, but where one of them will fight to be the last man standing.

Presented using a crude torn-paper technique, the warriors are roughly depicted, each one of them carrying an equally unrefined representation of a sword, although the real swords hanging from the top of



III. 3.1: The showcase with the two Vikings and items laid out like military weapons.

the showcase add sophistication. In their other hands they are carrying what cannot be interpreted as anything but shields. One of the men has a long bristling moustache and perhaps they are wearing helmets, although this is difficult to discern with certainty.

If indeed poised to fight, the two warriors are standing in a weird position considering that their shields ought to be in front of their bodies to protect them. The peculiarity of the set up stresses that the depiction of the event is not naturalistic, the form of expression and content being extremely stylised. The profile chosen, along with the bristling arms and shields, which look more like thick rings, are reminiscent of petroglyphs, which clearly they are not. They are a contemporary interpretation of the relationship between two warriors.

The silhouettes are deep red, connoting power, energy and blood. These are violent people who fight until they draw blood. The images, however, have several connotations. For example, located on the beach, the two figures connote not just war and aggression but also Vikings as attackers, conquerors and warriors.

Roland Barthes (1964/1988:47), in writing about connotations, believes they represent an architectural structure of signs taken from a vari-

able quantity of lexis and that each lexis is coded. The further we descend into an individual's psychological depths, the more rare and less classifiable are the signs. And if we can see beyond connotations as general and known, then it is possible to step deeper into the perhaps more private connotations.

The museum display also conveys connotations that are primarily physical. For example, as a child I have played with swords and shields and crossed swords and hit my playmate opponent's shield. The display also invokes imaginary bands of warriors in hiding waiting to attack, thus connoting a variety of bodily experiences and knowledge about the seriousness and pain of being attacked from the side. As an adult the images cause me to associate what I see with my own sons. Wanting them to have exceptionally nice shields when they were children, I helped them make beautiful replicas of Prince Valiant and Sir Lancelot's shields. Their playing, however, was not un Hazardous, as their long lances were at times in danger of causing them genuine harm.

Harkening back to these memories introduces the influential impact the media and relationships. Showcasing the Viking swords and axes also calls to mind the comic artist's depictions of Vikings, knights, Nordic mythology and everything else read over time whose source has been forgotten but whose knowledge and impressions remain.

The showcase also brings the Musée de la Tapisserie de Bayeux to mind, with its beautiful, magnificent staircase leading to the picturesque castle - and then the long walk through the visual and textual interpretations of the Bayeux Tapestry until the visitor finally enters a dark, sacred, secret place: the actual tapestry. Surprisingly, it is not very big. Yes, it is long, but at only 70 cm high, it does not stretch from floor to ceiling. The tapestry is not really a tapestry, but an embroidered cloth, defying the expectations set up by the reproductions presented in books and on posters. Calling it a tapestry gives the impression that it is bigger and more powerful than it actually is.

The visitor as object

The small part of the exhibition on ancient times described above is significant because this is one place where I met, so to speak, the people from antiquity, i.e. a narrative voice, and where two elements combine, the exhibition and a spectator. As a spectator I bring with me scattered bits of knowledge and experiences e.g. mediated knowledge derived from books, comics, pictures and movies. And a physical knowledge stemming from playing with swords and shields and from playing with my own children.

This part of the exhibition has rudiments of a narrative, an interpretation and a gestalt. There is a representation of people who have a relationship who are involved in an action and that I as a viewer can relate

to. There are rudiments of a narrative because I can connect the figures and the rocks to imagine that what is depicted is actually happening right in front of me. I can also imagine what happened immediately before this image was frozen in place and what will happen next. The images portray a *folded story* as it does not follow a classic, extended narrative with a beginning, middle and end. Instead, the spectator can add to and re-think the story. The narrative fuses the image, the narrator and the viewer into an amalgam (Berger 1982:285).

I meet a voice, an institutional storyteller who wants to share something with me, and I meet a personal expression (the two fighters and their context). The exhibition on ancient times also has other drawings, photographs and texts, which are characterised by their neutrality and objectification. The antiquities exhibition of course also has objects, an overwhelming number of objects, which are displayed in 23 large and small rooms. There are 6,000 objects, plus one exceptionally important one, namely me as the visitor. The question presents itself as to why all these boring, crude, refined, well-known, surprising, funny, dramatic and beautiful objects can tell so little. I have the opportunity to gain significant knowledge by discovering what the origin, era and function of each object is. I can gain knowledge relating to who, what, where and when, but not much about why.

If we look at ancient times through the theory of the four experience fields (Gjedde & Ingemann 2008), then I acquire factual knowledge and hidden knowledge may be activated so I can connect with the objects I see. The exhibition, however, does little to activate other experience fields, failing to provide gratifying answers to these questions: What does the exhibition do to activate me physically? What is there to provoke my opinions? What is there to clarify my values?

Some aspects of the exhibition stir my feelings, for example a beautiful object such as the Chariot of the Sun and the famous Gundestrup Cauldron with its inscrutable figures, but no explanation is given to clarify that they were produced far from where they were found. They were found in Denmark, but knowing more about their origin would engage my feelings and contribute to the debate in Denmark on being a multi-ethnic society. This narrative however is one that can only be produced by the visitor.

There is what there is, and if the exhibition does not want anything but to convey factual knowledge, what happens to the knowledge? Eco believes that the text contains expectations about the skills a reader has when it comes to choice of diction and lexical knowledge as well as knowledge of styles and genres. These choices are the framework of what Eco calls the Model User and are embedded in the text and are even produced by the text. What speaks to me as a visitor? One example is this ordinary text displayed at the bottom of the showcase with the two red warriors:

The Vikings had a number of well-trained warrior units at their disposal. The professional fighters who were in service to the king and the personal bodyguards of great men (retainers) represented the army's rootstock. When the king called for assistance in times of war, villages and farms also had to provide the country's army with men.

In 994 Sven the Dane and Olaf Tryggvason attacked England with 94 ships and about 3,000 men. Only some of them were professional warriors, and many were probably summoned for the purpose. The massive assault on England in the late Viking Age shows that the Vikings mastered land-based warfare with large armies. This required a high degree of military organisation, especially an effective supply section. Sven the Dane's army of 3,000 men required a daily supply of 4.5 tonnes of food.

This text speaks to me by informing me and presenting knowledge on the Vikings' military organisation and the size of the army in the attack on England in 994. I nevertheless have to collect and be the collector of data. But - and this is my point - the text speaks to me as an object. I am a vessel that has to gather knowledge and independently convert it into a narrative. The objective, neutral text transforms me into an objective, neutral data collector.

The text defines the reader

The form and content of the text define the reader and how readers can activate themselves in relation to the text. The text is like a message dispatched in a bottle picked up by someone who can then use it as they see fit. In contrast to a narrative text, an objectivised text does not provide many cues. A narrative text has a story that follows the canonical narrative structure with a theme presented at the beginning, a setting, a degree of causality and temporality and, finally, a solution connected to the core plot. A narrative text also implies personification. On the semantic level imaginative, emotive language is used (Gjedde & Ingemann 2008:36)

A message in a bottle with a narrative structure and imaginative, emotive language approaches the viewer and the viewer's inner narratives. The internal narratives can be viewed as nested structures through which viewers and readers structure their experiences.

The display text quoted above has no narrative structure and is absent of imaginative, emotive language. Moreover no attempt is made to directly address the reader. Key verbs include: disposal, attack, mastered and called, reflecting the exposition of power and initiative associated with the Vikings. There is nothing in the text that illustrates assault, conquest, violence, death and destruction or the reasons for these actions. A traditional journalistic text is expected to contain details about the place

where the event takes place (in this case England); information about those involved in the event (here, only Vikings); the cause (an attack but not why - is there famine in Denmark?); the consequences (how many British were killed? What happened after the conquest? Was it just a robber expedition?).

The text ends with "... [an] army of 3,000 men required a daily supply of 4.5 tonnes of food". This fact represents a familiar rudimentary detail readers are able to grasp and picture, especially the sheer quantity of food.

When the texts and context of ancient times maintain the viewer at an objectified level, what happens goes well beyond how visitors read and understand things and contexts. After walking through the antiquity exhibition and arriving in the last of the 23 rooms and having seen the last of the 6,000 objects, then even I end up as an object, object 6,001.

This process occurs in three ways: by going through the huge collection of objects, by being addressed as an object throughout the exhibition, i.e. without emotion or values, and by being presented with too few human relations, the final way being the most crucial. Traces of human activity are visible e.g. in the stone axes, jewellery and swords made by craftspeople and the surprising presence of trephination skulls. Few traces of human beings acting in relation to each other or of the relationships they may have had with one another are evident.

Objects seen at a glance

"In the simulacrum of objects all images and resources can be considered of equal status ... we do not follow the division of sources of information between the primary (the object itself), secondary (facts about the object) and tertiary (interpretation of the object) that is normally upheld within the culture of museums" (Beardon & Worden 1995:75).

Beardon and Worden see museums from the inside as belittling the value of objects and the factual information about them and an upgrading of the interpretation. From my perspective, the transformation of visitors into objects is far more serious. When objects meet objects perhaps simply nothing happens. When objects meet people, anything can happen. Meeting the simple representation of two men fighting with swords allowed me to create a rudimentary narrative, an interpretation, based on the picture in its context.

In my analysis, the showcase containing the image of two warriors and the swords, axes and stones are used as a common image for the entire antiquities exhibition (Lindberg 1991:279). The showcase, a metonym for the entire exhibition, is used symbolically to tell the story of the Vikings as warriors, assailants and robbers. This common image is of a particular kind and represents what is clearly absent in the exhibition.

I argue that the absence of humans and their relationships - both in antiquity and in the relationship between the exhibition and the visitor - keeps the visitor in the role of an object. Only the most knowledgeable, active visitor remains human and adds life and human relationships to the objects when the exhibition provides so few cues. Sheldon Annis believes that, "The magic that makes museums so attractive may lie in the flexibility with which people create their own space. Museums are more than the sum of their label and their designed order. Like the objects in them, museums do not *have* a meaning. Rather, they accepted and reflect the meanings that are brought to them" (1987:171).

Annis makes it simple. I agree that the visitor brings meaning to the museum and that the museum must accept and reflect the visitor's impact. This explanation however is too simple. As an institution and as a producer of meaning, one must have greater objectives. Just accepting and reflecting the opinions brought into an exhibition means that the good exhibition has no goals. If two objects are shown together, then visitors, equipped with an inherent urge to create meaning, will try to find a meaning and a relationship between them. The starting point for the creation of meaning is still a 'text' in the form of objects, texts, images, design and space. Someone produces this 'text' with a purpose. The museum is not just an exhibition of objects; it is the dissemination of knowledge and communication in society (see also chapter 22).

As a viewer, I would like someone to take me by the hand and explain what I am seeing. The narrative is also in the objects. The potential stories in the objects can be unfolded.

Annis, who does not believe this process is necessary, makes an analogy between an Expressionist painting, Chagall's *The Man and the Sentry*, and the museum's exhibition of objects. In Chagall's painting objects are disassociated from relations in the real world. The released objects become symbols, or at least initiators. One man's face is balanced on a horse (a smoking horse, a smoking house) from where a sentry is marching. A horse, a house and a sentinel instead of a torso, they rest on the meaty (male) bone that sits on a chair.

Annis believes that, "There is a contextual disorder, but it is precisely the disorder that makes the work provocative" (1987:169). He finds that the viewer has a double pleasure: first, by testing the artist's emotional resonance and by testing one's own reaction to the proposal (is there a horse and a sentinel inside me?); and second, an intellectual process by summarising, guessing again and interpreting the artist and his symbols (was there a horse and a sentinel inside Chagall?).

The symbols in the expressionist painting are flat and frozen. Users can only stand in front of the surface and project themselves into the picture. Annis sees the museum as a symbolic landscape, which is more three-dimensional than it is two-dimensional, where the visitor can

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move into, through and over it. When Annis makes the analogy between the Expressionist painting and the museum's exhibition of objects he is saying that the objects are placed arbitrarily and can be experienced as intensively as the Chagall painting. Is this true?

This may well be true if the person placing and combining the objects is an artist of Chagall's stature and assembles them in the exhibition as though it were a canvas. All sorts of objects can be combined on a canvas and be said to constitute a symbolic expression, but it takes a strong and provocative expression to turn it into a work of art and not just another boring, uninteresting work. A successful work is determined by the unifying whole and the intentions the creator had.

The provocative aspects and the narrative lie not in the objects themselves, but in how the objects are put together to create an internal or external version of how one sees the world and the world's objects. All objects cannot create relationships due to similarities, differences and contradictions.

The showcase with the two red warriors, swords, axes and stones does not have this kind of provocative impact, but it is the best bet when it comes to incorporating the human aspect into this antiquities exhibition. Moreover a truly open, co-creative observer is required to make it possible to elicit meaning from this common image.

Chapter 4

The hidden exhibition - The new prehistory exhibition at the National Museum in Copenhagen

This chapter deals with the same exhibition as the one in Chapter 3, which looks closely at a single showcase as a prototypical example of the presentation of objects and narratives that successfully engages visitors. The old exhibition has been taken down and rebuilt from scratch, opening up the opportunity to present Danish prehistory in new and unique ways. In analysing the whole exhibition space, I have chosen three areas of impact that show the approach the curators and designers chose to pursue talking to visitors. The focus on scenography and narrativity reveals an exhibition that is rather problematic from the perspective of the user.

In order to understand why the exhibition initially seems so old-fashioned and out-of-date, the intended narrative of the exhibition is studied in detail. The focus of the additional material in the museum is on "... early life in Denmark ...", and this point of view is promising, but also ends in disappointment. There is so little life in the exhibition, which also only has limited potential for young visitors to explore anything surprising. This is thought-provoking, considering that this exhibition may well be a permanent fixture for the next thirty years.

Any exhibition constructs its visitors, who have certain circumstances and knowledge and who are familiar with certain categories in addition to being filled with curiosity. The exhibition creates the lexis, which has the ability to exclude or include the visitor. In this chapter I look at the new installation of Danish antiquities at the National Museum of Denmark in Copenhagen. For several years, many of the objects had been in storage but were now being used in the new exhibition, which officially opened in 2008.¹

My analysis will explore three main issues: the story the new exhibition tells, who the story is told to and what visitors can get out of the exhibition.



Antiquity is objects – 12.000 of them

This section begins by presenting the new exhibition through a specific user's experience as well as a review of the exhibition while also providing a description of the exhibition and language of display, objects and space.

The specific user is my good friend Hans, who is excited about the new prehistory exhibition at the National Museum, a place he visited with his father in the 1940s and whose permanent collection he has seen multiple times since. Now 67 years of age, he is pleased and happy to see the objects again, especially in good lighting, after they had been hidden away while the rebuilding took place. He does not stop to read a single text as he is uninterested in doing so, because he already has all the knowledge he needs. Well-educated and deeply interested in history, Hans is in every way the ideal visitor for an exhibition on Denmark's prehistory.

Fully satisfied with the objects alone, he has all the categories he needs. Familiar with almost every single object, he knows the chronology, the archaeological division and the material. Being able to see twice as many objects, namely 12,000, is sheer pleasure for him.

He does not concentrate on the curatorial aspects or the design approach at all. For example, he hardly sees that on the left side of each room is an exceedingly long frieze of square sheets of glass measuring 1.5 x 1.5 m placed in strongly lit boxes. Different colours represent the three main periods in ancient times and there is a timeline, introductory texts,

Ill. 4.1: To the left an illuminated wall stretches through the exhibition and is filled with texts, photographs and drawings as well as a timeline. To the right of the exhibition rooms is a row of showcases with well-lit objects organised according to strict aesthetic principles. Seeing the objects up close is possible here.



photographs, drawings and detailed explanations. Hans also ignores the right side of the room with its newly designed, well-lit display case, which clearly illuminates the large quantities of objects beautifully positioned based on aesthetic and design criteria. Hans is impervious, as long as the objects, the many objects, are there.

Construction of the visitor

Hans is somewhat of an unusual visitor as he approaches the exhibition differently than the average visitor. First-time visitors normally spend time trying to make sense of the ordered chaos, doing so in an unconscious, Sherlock Holmes manner to find signs and symbols. The visitor is on the lookout for the signs and traces curators, exhibition designers, producers, writers and stage directors more or less present consciously. As a result the form and content of an exhibition work to construct the audience. Not necessarily through intentional statements, but through the whole physical and material organisation of objects in relation to each other in a space with the use of design in mind. Model Users are both a theoretical and an analytical construction that reflects the strategies the producer of the exhibition has directed at the user.

If an exhibition is to create a narrative understanding, then the exhibition must meet the user in a forthcoming manner. *So how does the exhibition start?* When meeting something new, people experience a sense of urgency and have the idea that they have a short amount of time find out what the exhibition is about; which particular approach or strategies the exhibition establishes; what one can expect to happen in the next hour; and what one can do at the exhibition. Perhaps there are good chairs to rest on and opportunities to connect one's existing knowledge with any new knowledge encountered. Finally, there is an overwhelming curiosity about how one is going to look at what one sees.

Upon entering the new antiquities exhibition visitors find a small pamphlet called, "Denmark's prehistory in 60 minutes", which provides guidance on how the exhibition should be read:

This guide focuses on some of the highlights of the recently reopened new prehistory exhibition. Each exhibit opens the door to a different aspect of early life in Denmark, from the emergence of the first hunters on the tundra to the construction of the unique Viking monument in Jelling, which marked the transition from paganism to Christianity. We very much hope you will enjoy your visit.

Early life in Denmark

'Life' refers to birth, growing up, working, dating, having children, creating social networks, growing old and dying. Questions are raised about the people of antiquity concerning how old they were when they



Ill. 4.2: This is the exhibition's teaser; where we are exposed to the exhibition lexis and the categories we have to use to think.

died; how tall they were; whether they had many children; how many of them lived in what was to become Denmark; and what their diet was like. Did they move far from home? What did they believe in? The phrase '... early life in Denmark' raises a variety of expectations in the optimistic visitor. But does the exhibition indeed begin by meeting some of these expectations?

The teaser is very simple; we are going to be taught. First, the special lexis in this exhibition, in this case the colour, is introduced. Three large boxes illuminated in three different bright colours hang on the walls: green represents the Stone Age; red-orange the Bronze Age and blue the Iron Age [Ill. 4.2].

The idea is to learn not only when the historic time distribution is an abstract temporal category, but also the reason why the subdivision is contingent upon the use of materials. Examples of the materials are provided in two showcases in front of each time period, e.g. for the Stone Age one showcase contains a large pile of flint and the other one has various objects carved in flint. The two main categories of weapons and tools generally define the three periods, while the Iron Age also includes jewellery and specialised kitchen utensils. Devoid of text or any explanations, the materials/objects in the showcases are not numbered. The only exception is a quote from Christian Jürgensen Thomsen's 1836 book, *Clues in Scandinavian Antiquity* [*Ledetraade i Nordisk Oldkyndighed*]:

Stone Age until 1700 BC. The Stone Age is the period when weapons and tools were made of stone, wood, bone and the like. There is no doubt that this was the earliest period in which humans lived in our regions. Metal was little known or completely unknown. In this period the large burial chambers of stone were built.

Normally, it is crucial that a good story or film begins in a precise manner, but this is not the case here. The text is highly timid and cautious. Surely the research conducted in the 172 years subsequent to 1836 has been able to provide more precise dating. The text also indicates that the aim of the exhibition is to convince or demonstrate to visitors that weapons and tools essentially constitute "... life in Denmark". The heading causes disappointment as what is presented is incongruous with the expectations the heading builds up to. The initial approach is also condescending in that the names of the periods, Stone, Bronze and Iron Age, quite simply and obviously indicate what materials distinguish them from one another.

Perhaps it is symptomatic that the first room is called Room 0 on the layout in the pamphlet because it is outside the actual exhibition. Many visitors exclaim with relief, "This is where it starts!" when they see a sign at the end of Room 0 that states, "Entrance to the exhibitions".

The exhibition fizzles out

After visiting the exhibition's twenty-four (+ zero) rooms, visitors have passed the 12,000 objects available for viewing. Visitors expect the final room, entitled *King and Christianity* [Ill. 4.3], to be exciting after such a long odyssey, but the room, dominated by two, no three, objects is peculiar. Tiny, the room contains a large model landscape made solely out of cardboard of a small town called Jelling and its church. Upon entering, the model is to the left and has list of black lowercase letters running from a-e. The adjacent explanations are sparse and not especially



Ill. 4.3: It is significant that there is no illuminated wall and timeline in the last room. And what happened to Norse mythology and Christianity?

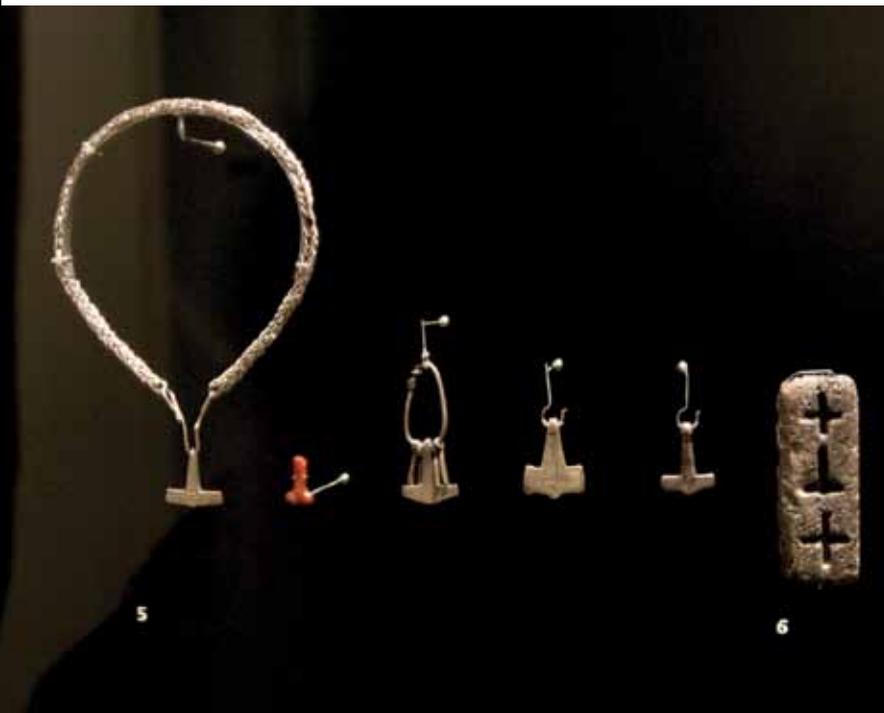


enlightening. One of them states, for example, “The northern hill with the burial chamber built in 958-59 and opened in 965-66”.

Up until the final room the idea was to follow the traces of the three materials that define the different eras. Instead of stone, bronze and iron, the final room is approached from a new angle and cardboard is used. There is also a rather esoteric text about King Gorm the Old, his burial place in Jelling and graves and churches, thus causing visitors to wonder where it all leads, but the exhibition is over. Exiting, visitors must be content with a cardboard model and a brief text that ends antiquity with the statement that “we” became Christianised. There is no explanation of the transition that took place and the Iron Age is presented as ending abruptly in 1050 AD.

There must obviously be some other indecipherable criteria at stake that involves Christianity as a spiritual and secular power. Unfortunately, the crucial conflict between belief in Norse mythology and the belief in Christ is not unfolded. On the right side of the room, there is the usual showcase with some small objects, among them jewellery, including a silver pendant of Thor’s hammer [Ill. 4.4]. The text in the showcase states:

From Norse mythology to Christianity - The transition from faith in Norse mythology to Christianity took place slowly. In the 9th century part of the population was Christian. In 965 when King Harald proclaimed the introduction of Christianity, the two religions had already lived side by side for a long time.



Ill. 4.4: The tiny pieces of silver jewellery show evidence of Norse mythology and Christianity.

The closing room is both highly different from the rest of the exhibition and yet also quite characteristic of it. Much is required of visitors, but too little information means viewers can hardly create a connection between what they know and what is new.

Faith is exciting. If a link can be established between the academic content and all the other kinds of communication happening in society, then it is quite obvious that unfolding Norse mythology requires more than just with a few scattered comments. This is also true regarding the introduction of Christianity, which happens with a rather tame cardboard model. The sparseness of the information hardly allows viewers to create a coherent narrative from the fragments presented. The presentation of what is otherwise an enthralling topic, Norse mythology and Christianity, also fails to live up to the promise of the initial teaser, “... early life in Denmark”.

First impact: Flint in the Bronze Age

The numerous objects and extensive amount of text in the exhibition battle for attention. Visitors are expected to look at every inch of the contiguous, infinitely long illuminated wall and to read each text and study each picture. This puts visitors in a dilemma, forcing them to choose between reading the massive illuminated wall and throwing an odd glance at the objects, or abandoning the illuminated wall altogether and being content to look at the infinitely many objects [Ill. 4.5].

Doing both is not especially sensible, because the correlation between the illuminated wall and the showcases presenting a large accumulation of objects is weak. This inconsistency creates a large mental space that allows for the completely private interpretation of objects and their relationship to one another. Located half way through the exhibition, the room entitled “Bronze - a precious raw material” illustrates how visitors are abandoned to make their own interpretations.

Although it says Bronze Age, the showcases on the right wall are filled with flint swords. A brief text explains that even in the Bronze Age people still used flint extensively. One of the swords, broken in eight places, is hung on a special plate protruding slightly from the wall [Ill. 4.6]. Obviously, brittle material like flint cannot withstand being cut into a piece thin enough to make a sword for very long. Visitors, using their general knowledge, may perhaps conclude that the sword was destroyed either because it had been buried for so long or during excavation.

Other, more massive flint swords remain unbroken, perhaps due to their size. Despite being beautifully shaped and unique, the swords are familiar and recognisable. After ten rooms with some of the same kinds of objects similarly displayed, the viewer may experience a sense of boredom. The illuminated wall fails to provide clues to inspire new interpretations, leaving visitors to use their everyday knowledge, but at the lowest



Ill. 4.5: The few generalised statements on the illuminated wall must be read, but they do not provide understanding and insight and leave vast amounts of knowledge hidden.



Ill.4.6: What is the story behind the broken sword?



possible level. Exploration of the objects does not go beyond evaluating whether they are beautiful or ugly or good or bad workmanship.

The second impact: Trepanation – a loss of information and experience

Room 4 has objects selected and placed in a decisive manner and texts that appear to make up a story. One showcase has twelve superb examples of axes arranged on an invisible grid of vertical and horizontal lines to create a narrative in which they appear to be on the verge of crushing a group of severed skulls. Although it looks violent, the display is also highly aesthetic, static and controlled [Ill. 4.7].

The skulls, punctured with precise holes, are one of the most conspicuous objects. The most immediate questions that arise are: Were the holes caused by an arrow or a spear? Did the people die from their injuries? Were the holes the result of torture? Were they the result of a medical procedure? A brief text below the three skulls states:

Close to death

People were also sacrificed in the early Stone Age. Two young girls ended their days in a lake, now Sigersdal Moor in North Zealand, one with a rope around her neck. Flint axes and a large clay vessel were also sacrificed in the same moor. Conflicts between peasants may also have triggered violence and killings. Medical procedures were used to treat combat injuries. Trepanation was a cranial surgery that sometimes succeeded.

In addition to being non-emotional, the text is incredibly dense and covers female sacrifices, the sacrifice of flint axes and pottery, violent conflicts and medical practices. The nature and tone of the text appeal mainly to well-informed visitors.

On its website, the National Museum, writes that the texts were written, "... so older children can read them", but should this be the overarching goal of the texts? The absence of underlying content and assumptions makes understanding the texts difficult. When this type of skull was originally used to create a narrative in the old antiquities exhibition of 1972, much more detail was provided [Ill. 4.8]:

People killed people

The skeletons of the country's first farmers bear witness to that. Slings and arrows put an end to their lives. Why? Organised fights or private encounters - both are probable. There were people among the peasants who could perform surgery, some skulls showing signs of trepanation, a surgical procedure in which a piece of skull is removed to allow the removal of bone frag-

Ill. 4.7: The 12 axes hang threateningly over the skulls.





Ill. 4.8: Trepanation is described in more detail in the 1972 exhibition, which is more investigative. The visitor is invited to think side by side with the expert researcher. Photo: Carsten Tage Nielsen, 2006.

ments, tumours or abscesses from diseased tissue. Violent acts often led to the need for surgery, the pathological evidence indicating the presence of malignancies.

The difference between the two texts (2008 and 1972) is not so much the length, but the richness of detail and the depth of explanation. The 1972 text was written by a knowledgeable but not omniscient person writing specifically about a topic of passionate interest. There are questions and a degree of uncertainty and conjecture concerning the explanations for the findings. The 2008 text is full of general postulations and devoid of an underlying story behind the facts. The link between the flint axes, pots, skulls and trepanation is only implied by virtue of the very broad theme “near death”.

An exhibition is not text, but text represents an easy shortcut for visitors to understand the objects on display. Text provides explanations, thus bolstering visitor understanding of the objects and the exhibition. When the National Museum enthusiastically writes that it took 18 hours to read all of the texts in the 1972 exhibition and it only takes one and a half hours in the new exhibition, they have missed the point. Namely that the key is to 1) create a fundamental framework through which visitors must see the exhibition and 2) define significant issues in the exhibition. The point is also that the composition of objects (and not text) must also provide a common thread.

The National Museum of Denmark’s curator, Lars Jørgensen, describes the exhibition as being divided into three sections, “The first division is a backlit timeline, where the main text and most of the graphics are located. The exhibition is still chronological, so that the process is progressive. Several points are nevertheless more thematic, where the scenography of the rooms is in focus, breaking the temporal course ... (2008)”.

The rooms’ central axis is freestanding showcases containing highlights from ancient times. There are also a number of seats where the audience can rest or look at selected objects. The 12 items listed as highlights are of course mentioned in the timeline and are often at the entrance of the associated room.

Finally, opposite the timeline is a wall of objects designed to give an impression of the diversity of items in the exhibition. The texts here primarily accompany the objects and are supplemented by individual graphic elements (Jørgensen 2008: 182-184).

The hidden exhibition

Creating a fundamental framework, defining significant issues and providing a common thread are what allow visitors, who are confronted with a variety of choices, to get something out of the exhibition. The 2008 exhibition lacks these key elements and comes across as strange and disappointing; its secrets remain hidden or disappear. The multitude of features is disruptive. The well-lit showcases make the copious number of objects visible,² but the objects compete with each other to be seen, continuing to render the knowledge hidden. The profuse number of objects is like a wall that does not allow visitor interest to be met with new knowledge.

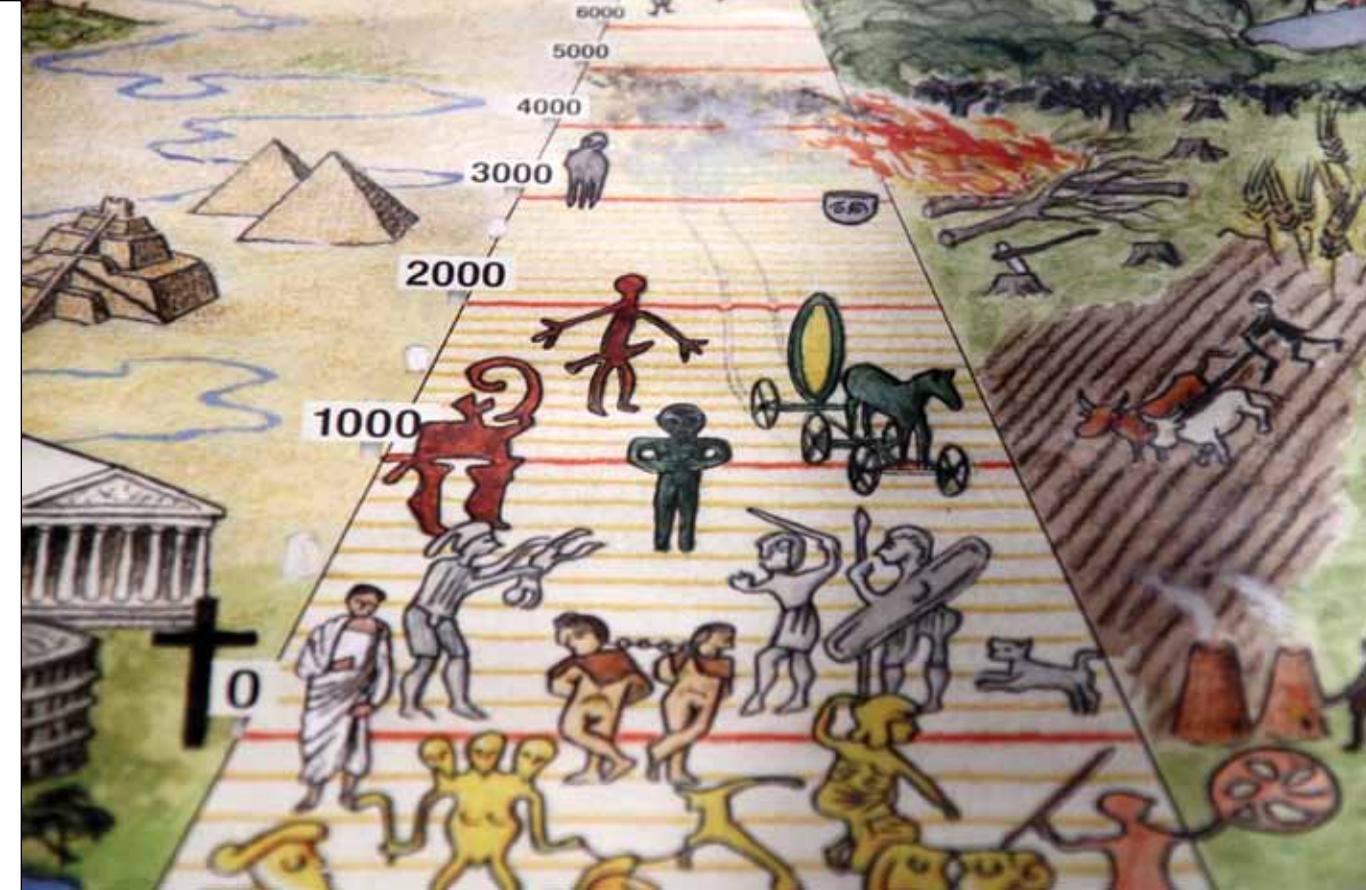
Another aspect that also maintains the opacity of the exhibition is the giant illuminated wall filled with demanding text. As the above analysis attempts to demonstrate, the text on the wall is very literal and makes penetrating its surface to reach the knowledge it intends to reveal difficult. Visitors must act as archaeologists, not only in relation to the visible findings and objects, but also in relation to the signs, characters and texts whose level of abstraction prevents them from being accessible and welcoming.

The third impact: The illuminated wall and outlook on the world

Most Danes have encountered the chronological table found in the popular science history magazine *Skalk* [Ill. 4.9]. This chronological table is embedded in the new exhibition on the illuminated wall and is clearly its best design element. A chronological table reflects a fundamental need to relate what is known with something else, which is probably known, but from a variety of contexts. Take, for example, the Viking room, where the first to unexpectedly confront the visitor is a colour photo of the beautiful Blue Mosque in Istanbul, previously Constantinople.

Paradoxically, the curatorial approach does not become obvious until almost the end of the exhibition. The approach however is not as real as *Skalk's* old chronology, where there is a clear depiction contrasting e.g. what was happening during the Bronze Age *at home* in Denmark (fields, plows and mud huts) with what was happening *out there* e.g. in Greece (impressive temples and pillars). The inability to identify the curatorial approach is closely linked to the new prehistory teaser, which apart from being dull and obscure, fails to open the door to the exciting aspects of the exhibition. Room 1 provides an outward perspective by showing the Palaeolithic cave paintings in Lascaux, France, but this is the last attempt to contextualise anything in the exhibition until Room 19, when a comparison to the Romans is suddenly presented.

Employing the outward comparative perspective raises the critical issue of whether visitors need to know anything about other European



Ill. 4.9: Chronological table from *Skalk*, a popular science magazine for archaeology, history and culture. The popularisation of these topics has created a special understanding of different eras and outward perspectives.

cultures. Why are there no comparisons to the Middle East, South America, Asia or Africa? Is the aim to provide perspective using the *Skalk* approach or is the goal to explain what and how cultural influences came to Denmark? An outward perspective is wonderfully useful, but what is it that visitors must look at?

Unfortunately, visitors are not met with any clear indication of what the outward perspective is to be used for. The exhibition leaves the impression that the common knowledge of visitors is being strenuously rejected. Have the curators adequately identified the assumptions and knowledge visitors have of antiquity? If the curators have a general commonsense view of antiquity, then they realise that one's consciousness of history is filled with fragments and that, at least for Scandinavian visitors, the Vikings and Norse mythology are dominant elements.

Visitor would be well-rewarded for diligently seeking out details associated with these areas. For example, there is a dark blue, well-lit display case with tiny reproductions of amazing ornaments depicting animals. They do not come across as overwhelmingly authentic despite what the abundant amount of flint Stone and Bronze Age objects gave promise to.

It is disheartening that the exhibition does not begin by communicating with visitors by meeting them where they are. The exhibition sorely lacks stories that allow visitors to connect what they see to the stories they already know from other media and contexts.

Were there 12 highlights?

My good friend Hans, who I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, strolls through the National Museum with his four-year-old grandson, Forde, who pulls on his grandfather's hand, asking repeatedly, "Where are the golden horns?" For Frode, his very own personal highlight is the golden horns. He knows what he is after and he does not want to see anything else. He is focused and knowledgeable.

The brief pamphlet distributed in the foyer of the museum presents 12 highlights that can supposedly be seen in 60 minutes, including the Egtved girl, the Sun Chariot, the Gundestrup Cauldron, the Golden Horns and eight other articles. These familiar items are characterised by an object-value derived from the material they are made of and the history told about them over the years, where they have taken on a significantly luminous, larger-than-life quality. The pamphlet presents the highlights as opening "... the door to different aspects of early life in Denmark".

This obviously good idea of highlighting certain artefacts is so poorly executed that the only item to be given true prominence is the Gundestrup Cauldron, where the scenography makes taking in its grandeur possible. Room 12, which houses the Sun Chariot, spectacularly fails to highlight the most noteworthy object by making the highly unfortunate move of overfilling the room with other bright objects. Altogether, the exhibition design unsuccessfully focuses on 7 or 8 of the highlights, leaving them relatively unnoticed and invisible. They are not given the specific substantive value the special term 'highlight' implies in the pamphlet.

Narrative - a quest for meaning

When discussing the use of an exhibition, an analysis should rightly cover creating, being created and using the exhibition to explore three different narratives: the room's narrative, the body's narrative and the emotional narrative.

The analysis presented in this chapter explores how it is possible to create meaning in the objects, spaces and texts provided by an exhibition, in other words, to create the *room's narrative*. The exhibition analysed nearly makes itself invisible and, as the National Museum writes on its website about the highlights, it is a studio collection.³ The museum also notes that it has "... a number of very beautiful ancient treasures known and loved by most Danes ...". This implies that the new prehistory exhibi-

tion is for people already familiar with the content and not for those for whom the secrets of antiquity are new.

The way visitors walk, stand and read texts or use their bodies while exploring an exhibition is the *body's narrative*. The new prehistory exhibition only engages the body minimally, making visitors somewhat tired after they are only halfway through it. The only activities that are encouraged are walking, standing, looking and reading texts, for example the texts and pictures on the illuminated wall. Visitors can of course also speak to those accompanying them or sit down en route, but, strikingly, there is nothing else to do. There are no digital media, buttons to press, screens to activate or sounds to trigger. The conspicuous absence of modern technology means that the exhibition could just as well have been developed in the 1930s and not in the mid-2000s.

An exhibition must challenge visitors emotionally, allowing them to create an *emotional narrative*.⁴ The museum apparently did not focus on young people as a specific target group, and although writing readable texts for older children is admirable, young people today expect more before an exhibition becomes relevant to them and they are able to create an emotional narrative. The new prehistory exhibition limits itself by focusing on archaeology professionals, the infinite number of objects, knowledge and perhaps older, highly enthusiastic visitors like my friend Hans.

The exhibition's inability to set in motion the room's narrative, the body's narrative and an emotional narrative is somewhat catastrophic considering that the new exhibition may be around for the next 30 years or more. One can only hope that for the sake of future visitors the exhibit will be modified, adjusted or even completely changed, especially when it comes to appealing to younger visitors. Until then, audiences will have to live with the new prehistory exhibit as it is.

Notes

- 1 The A.P. Møller and Chastine McKinney Møller Foundation for General Purposes gave USD 36 million to help establish the exhibition.
- 2 Reflections from the illuminated wall and the strong light can be disturbing in rooms that are dark, perhaps causing interesting objects to be less visible.
- 3 <http://www.natmus.dk/sw34914.asp>
- 4 The room's narrative, the body's narrative and the emotional narrative are inspired by *The Attention Model* (see Chapter 7).

Chapter 5

Mise-en-scène

– One artist constructing himself retrospectively into the future

The art historian who accompanied me at the ARoS exhibition is Associate Professor Ane Hejlskov Larsen, Department of Art History, Aarhus University, Denmark.

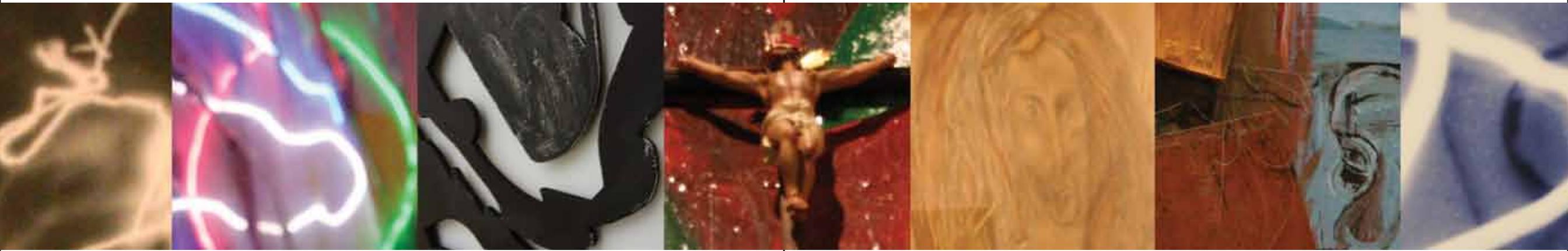
With art historian Ane Hejlskov Larsen as my companion I am visiting a retrospective exhibition on a famous Danish artist and plan to look at how the whole mise-en-scène constructs the artist and the visitor. Ane and I are open to finding the cues and leitmotifs that can help us expose unarticulated arguments that block the impact of the exhibition as a whole.

A key aspect of an exhibition is the amount of time visitors allocate to the exhibition. Spending a half hour on an exhibition allows time to quickly get an impression of the exhibition and the artist's motifs as well as the materials brought into play, not to mention the museum's agenda. This is also true for the retrospective exhibition of the Danish artist Erik A. Frandsen at ARoS Aarhus Museum of Modern Art, where Frandsen's brilliant neon globe, huge flower pictures, peculiar steel plates with cut-out flowers and neon lights are on display. There are also various particle board pictures made with a fretsaw, half-empty charcoal drawings, pulsating red and orange neon shapes, photographs of a naked couple and the tracks they make set in LED lights, mock-ups of the artist's family home, colour negatives next to paintings with the same motif and large, heavy glass mosaics [Ill. 5.1]

Below is an example of one of the brief descriptions the museum provides to help viewers with the overwhelming visual experience they encounter:

Mud and blockades

After a riotous period Frandsen retrieves calming inspiration in Nordic art. This results in a number of monumental paintings, the so-called mud paintings, where Frandsen creates an anti-classical



Ill. 5.1: Close-ups of artist Erik A. Frandsen's many motifs and techniques.

painting in which pictorial space disintegrates and the figure more or less blends in with the background.

Unless highly knowledgeable about art, viewers may immediately give up when confronted with the concept of e.g. Nordic art. Is it in fact a well-defined concept where Munch, Hammershøj, Krøjer, Billgren or whoever else automatically comes to mind? Will readers be familiar with what an anti-classical painting is? Some viewers will be enriched by the framework the texts provide for the pictures and by the challenge and invitation to dialogue with the artworks on display. Paramount to creating a dialogue however is not the texts, but how the mounting is structured and the spaces are laid out.

An exploration of these other cues reveals additional aspects of the exhibition not evident in the texts and points out the other phenomenological and communicative approaches taken by the museum. This exploration does not primarily focus on the artwork but rather the staging, arrangement and textual framings performed by the museum's curators and how these design elements work as a whole to construct one or more narratives. The analysis will mirror the approach taken in Mieke Bal's splendid book on reading exhibitions, *Double Exposure*, which explores "... three areas of exposition usually treated separately: museal exposition, the exposure of bodies in cultural artifacts, and exposition of arguments" (1996:5).

Bal also emphasises that the most obvious place these three areas of exposition are integrated into is in the actual, specific exhibition of artefacts in museums and galleries. She explains that the selection and ordering of items is,

.... made 'readable' on the basis of arguments which often remain unarticulated, but which tend to be related to a particular kind of use value. One such value is aesthetics; another one is knowledge, including historical knowledge (1996:5).

Thus the aim of this analysis is to make what often remains unarticulated into transparent and visible traces related to the lifeworld of the visitor and the art history background of the curator.

Searching for indicators

Entering the revolving door at ARoS from City Hall Park, visitors check in, hang their coats in the wardrobe and gain an overview of the various exhibitions. A large curved staircase leads to the exhibition on Frandsen, who turned 50 in 2007. The museum's programme explains that it is a retrospective exhibition of works from the past 25 years and covers over 2,000 m². The exhibition begins even before entering the building, where brightly coloured neon signs hang on outside walls and on the various floors by stairwells.

A retrospective exhibition is far more than the individual works of art. In this case it spans over 25 years, the rooms creating numerous sequences and narratives held together partly by the individual works of art, but also by clues put out or highlighted by the artist and the curators.

The ARoS exhibition, in principle, addresses anyone who comes to see it, the presentation of this major exhibition on Frandsen stresses that he is an artist of international calibre. Because of areas of expertise, art historian Ane Hejlskov Larsen and I, a communication theorist, are not just average visitors. Our visit will stretch well beyond a half an hour into



an entire day and the aim is to enter into a dialogue about this exhibition from two different points of view.

The exhibition is called the 'double space', but the museum offers no explanation about the meaning of this term during the exhibition. Finding out what it means requires reading the little pamphlet available by the stairs or buying the exhibition catalogue in the museum shop. These two resources reveal that double space has two meanings. The pamphlet states that it specifically refers to the exhibition entrance room, while museum director Jens Erik Sørensen's introductory article in the catalogue explains that the double space occurs with the tray-image series, characterising the double space as "... a stylistic sandwich of figurative expressionism and abstract minimalism" (2008:40). Unaware of these definitions, Ane and I see one aspect of the duality as referring to the relationship between the artist's work and the role of dissemination. Our initial interpretation of double space before reading the pamphlet and the catalogue is the one we use as a central thread throughout the exhibition.

During our visit, in addition to examining how other indicators develop and merge together, we will discuss the everyday experiences we encounter that can both appeal and repel visitors.

Visitors under 16 years of age

Our eight-hour non-stop stay in the museum ends in a special room for *Juniors* that includes three environments with chairs meant for one family perhaps comprised of a father, mother and two children. The main theme of the room is family. A pair of Frandsen's paintings hangs on the walls and by the door is a text entitled 'erik a. frandsen JUNIOR' followed by:

Ill. 5.2: Two girls sitting much like the Frandsen family in the picture in the background. Everyday life as sociological and psychological categories is stressed.





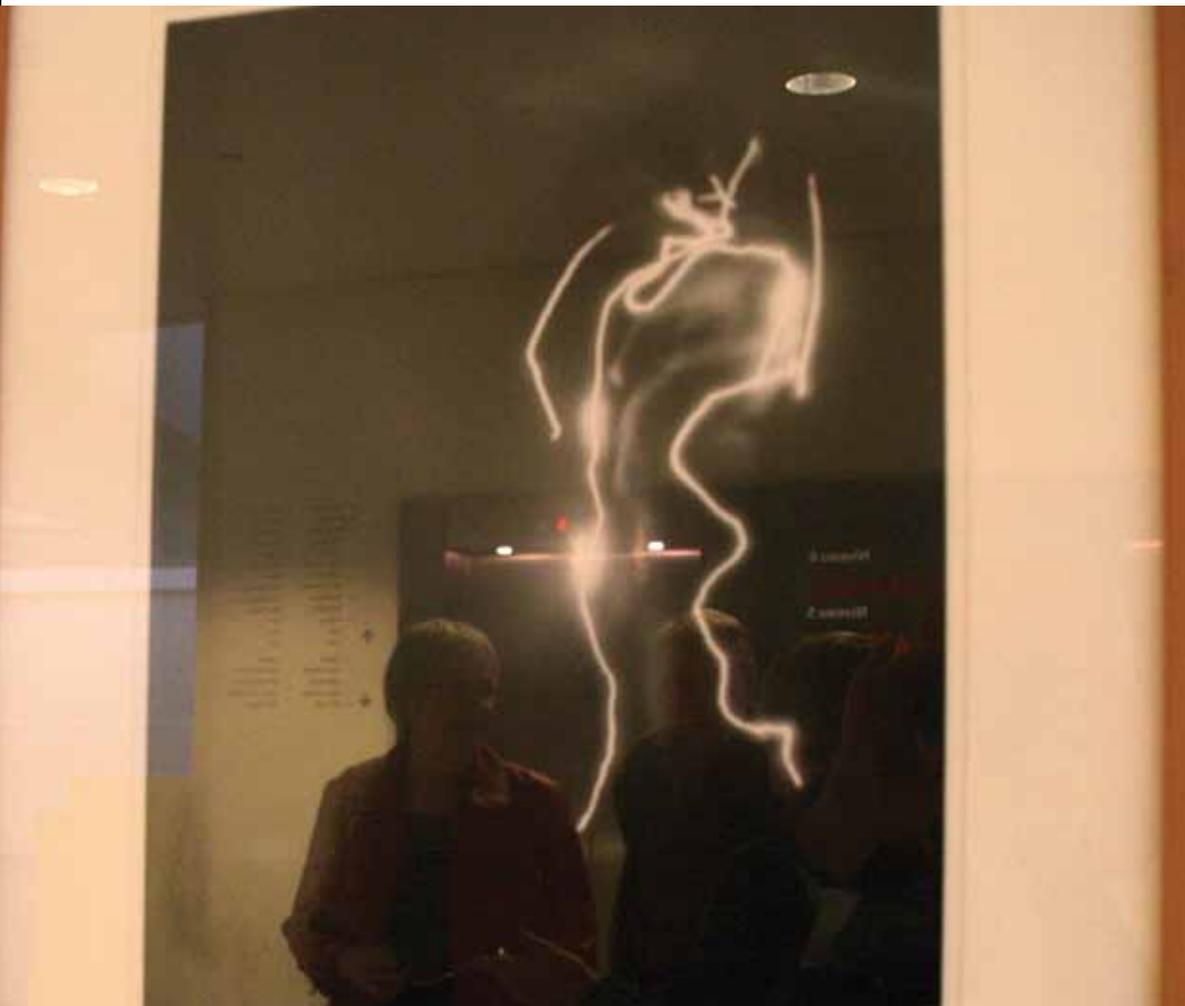
Ill. 5.3: Are these snapshots simply family snapshots or are they sketches for what will become large paintings?

The family. How much do you know about your family? Who makes the decisions? Who is the greatest? Who makes the least noise? Who is most fair? How many people are there? What is the family structure and pattern like?

Although the goal is apparently to talk about family, we focus on the dissemination approach [Ill. 5.2]. Dissemination generally means reducing the complex material that makes up life and art, but the text by the door is a bit strange. Small children and young people can of course talk about their own families on a sociological and psychological level as the questions posed propose, but how do the issues raised relate to Frandsen's exhibition? Dramatically focusing on the family as an interpretative key to understanding Frandsen's art perhaps focuses too heavily on its content. Focusing unilaterally on the content renders Frandsen's experimental use of various materials invisible, leaving visitors less likely to address this aspect.

The questions asked primarily focus on the visitor's family, consequently narrowing the exhibition and making it rather one-dimensional instead of opening it up. Families can also choose to relax in the chairs and talk about what they saw in the exhibition, which is what we do. We also talk about the large, beautiful photographs taken by Frandsen that hang closely side-by-side in a long row outside the junior room [Ill. 5.3]. Ane and I read them as travel images, agreeing that they differ from the snapshots a normal family would take as tourists. Some photos are of family members, e.g. Frandsen's wife and son, identifiable because we recall their faces from paintings earlier in the exhibition that have made them familiar to us. The family and its welfare play a supporting role in the photographs, just as they do in the paintings. The photographs chiefly reveal Frandsen's visual fascination with other cultures, lifestyles, colours, clothing, landscapes, people and objects. Recognisable motifs from Frandsen's paintings also appear in the photos, e.g. a close up of a tray of fruit balanced on a white wooden staircase on a hot summer day, two stuffed birds, a pale purple hotel with a woman, perhaps Frandsen's wife, about to undress. His paintings take these motifs and make them even more static and eternal.

Hence the photographs outside the junior room work not only as photographs but also as models or preliminary sketches, but they are more than just momentary snapshots and were released prior to the exhibition as a separate book entitled, *The Frozen Moment Desert – Scared Shit Restless To-tolerant, Reading Time (Killing Time), Acknowledged Memorabilia, Time Has Come-For Real Immigrant-Travelers, Photo Book*. The decision to place the photographs beside the junior room and not in the main exhibition so visitors can easily discover the exciting connection between Frandsen's paintings and his photographs is a bit odd as the



III. 5.4: A black and white photograph of a woman with light showing her body movements.

photographs play an important role in understanding Frandsen's image perception and image method.

The teaser and many indicators

The staircase leading down to the exhibition has a number of similar black and white portrait photographs mounted with white passepartouts in classic, light wooden frames, the curvature of the museum walls providing a panoramic effect. Although we move from one photo to the next, we remain aware of the images in front and behind us and zoom back and forth to see how the individual photographs differ. The pictures have the same recurring motif of a barely perceptible naked woman who becomes visible with the help of a light mounted on her body. When her position changes, the contours of her body are revealed.

We alternate between the photographs and discuss Frandsen's tech-



III. 5.5: Colourful neon light images hanging along the museum's curved staircase transform and enlarge the movements of the woman in the black and white photographs.

nique before reading the first display text. We both remember the Danish COBRA painter Asger Jorn, who, similar to Picasso, made drawings with light. These drawings were photographed in photographer Poul Poulsen's studio in the 1950s. The idea was to paint with a flashlight to create a work that only became visible when the negative was developed. Frandsen's photographs are not drawn with light simply to deliberately create a drawing using light, but to represent movements. The woman – or the artist captures traces of an action on camera, e.g. the woman caressing her body or removing articles of clothing.

Curious about the technique used, Ane and I discuss whether the images are caused by the light strapped to the naked woman's arms and legs or whether the traces of light are the result of the artist drawing around the model in a mirror or standing behind her? Text informs visitors that the woman in the photos is Frandsen's wife, Annette, and that putting



lights on her arms to create the images was Frandsen's idea. Frandsen most certainly chose the specific photos on display, transforming them into the process of undressing, which in turn provides an indication that guides us as we move further into the exhibition.

Further down the steps there is a neon relief, which reproduces the trail of light from the photographs. The woman disappears completely now along with the black and white photos, but her motions, together with photographs, are echoed by the tracks of light. Her presence however would have been invisible in the neon lights without having seen the black and white photos first. The one medium builds upon the other to create new meanings.

The neon items share the joint title *Ghosts*, causing us to associate them with *Ghostbusters*, an American film with impish ghosts, but the

Ill. 5.6: The neon globe is fascinating because it mirrors the movements of a couple's hands during intercourse. Intimacy is blown up in size in industrial neon light.

accompanying text on the wall states, "... Frandsen's neon ghosts show a new interpretation of the woman's portrait ..." We are much happier with the other more interesting associations we have come up with and that have been triggered by the works of art along the stairs. We do not invent the leitmotifs; we are getting a gift with various elements to use in our own construction of the leitmotifs.

In the next room, which is still close to the neon lights, we talk about how fascinating and fun they are, but that they might have been pretty boring and quite invisible out in the public domain, unless they were much larger. We recall a variety of famous neon lights in the commercial world with highly simplified, clear motifs designed to communicate in the dark of night. They are visually compelling, but they have no strong textual anchor.

The reflections, e.g. of other visitors in the glass on the black and white photos are annoying, but it remains to be seen whether these reflections will be revealed as a leitmotif.

Artworks, structure, space – staging the beholder

The exhibition is free of the constraints of time – or it is merely in the present. The museum's architecture helps strengthen the feeling that time has stopped for us as visitors. No disruptive phone calls, no city noises and no pressing duties to take care of. We are focused on being present in the exhibition. We meet other visitors with the same goal, walking two by two and talking together about what they see.

We walk through a black automatic sliding glass door, not because we are being lured by something, but because we always go in here. Many additional colours and lights beckon to the right of the sliding glass doors, but we ignore them and choose to go through the doors, because we believe the museum intends for us to start here. As we move toward the sliding glass doors, they open slowly with some resistance to reveal a large captivating light sculpture five meters tall hanging from the ceiling [Ill. 5.6]. Shaped like a ball and almost touching the floor, it entirely fills up the space in front of us. Brilliant in every sense of the word, it totally overwhelms us. This giant neon globe consisting of an organised jumble of neon-coloured threads woven in and out among each other is reflected in a small mirror. Later, after reading the booklet for the exhibition, we discover that the aforementioned leitmotifs are at play again, thus enhancing our experience of the neon globe, whose intricacies are the result of more than just play. The pattern evidently stems from the couple's hand movements during intercourse. A pivotal aspect of this work is that the viewer is also reflected in it.

The teaser with the mirror at the entrance put us both on the trail of mirroring as a new guiding indicator. We discover that the entire room and anyone going into it enters into the works as reflections, covered and



III. 5.7: A cylinder and wall covered by milled steel show the reflections of visitors. The artwork is more than just the physical objects.



Ill. 5.8: Top row: some of Frandsen's first paintings, which were done quickly with cheap industrial paint. Bottom row: black wooden reliefs made with a fretsaw.

uncovered into infinity. The mirrors are not placed randomly, but staged with precision, the spatial mechanisms making viewers aware of space as a form that engages [Ill. 5.7].

We talk about what the work really is. In isolation the actual neon globe could have hung anywhere, but certainly not over someone's couch. The design makes it appear as though it were made for the room, where it is displayed, which is the case to an even greater degree in the second room to the right of entry room. In the second room, the globe is reflected in a cylinder of steel and walls with steel plates with fantastic flowers milled into them. The reflection from a moving rectangular red neon light in the third room is also reflected in the steel plates. Clearly integrated with each other, the globe, the cylinder and the rectangle in these three rooms combine to constitute a work of light and movement that rises far above the decorative to create an extraordinarily intense experience where the art work and its individual elements, in a sense, become invisible. The rooms themselves and their entirety as works of art in turn become visible via viewers' movements. We are confronted by several rooms: the room with the images, the motifs and their relationship to each other, as in the first room, and our own specific activities and those of visitors, as in the second room. The images are reflected in each other and visitors are involved in this strong mirroring effect. We are convinced that visitors of all ages will easily become aware of this indicator. Nonetheless, we are doubtful whether the other indicators in the exhibition appeal to all age groups.

The second structure: chronology

Around this core of light, movement, flowers and viewers is another story that is clearly chronological. The chronology begins as soon as we move to the left side of the entry room and continue from room to room, our comments interconnected to each other. Skipping some rooms is not an option, though some artworks are more entrancing than others.

The story begins in 1982, where we meet a young man, Frandsen, who is trying to experiment with different materials. There are big black wooden reliefs measuring 122 x 122 cm. Packed with action, they are highly figurative. Above them, hang some of Frandsen's first small oil paintings, which are splashed with acrylic and bicycle varnish [Ill. 5.8]. Ane remembers them from *Eks-skolen*, a highly experimental art school in Copenhagen, where the images were created in the space of a few hours. Highly expressive with a humoristic distance, they are supported by the casual pencil drawings on the other side of the wall that show drinking, women and penises. The drawings, based on proverbs and language games, are commented on in vulgarised, symbolic language. Any visitor over the age of 13, no matter their level of experience, would be able to understand what was going on.

The first year covered by the exhibition is dealt with briefly, the art historian apparently having left out several earlier pictures not deemed relevant for the retrospective selection the exhibition is built upon. In the next room we jump directly into several collages. There are pieces of wood stapled to some of the paintings. On another wall, there are paintings of Christ crucified and red, green and silver boxes are attached to the paintings [Ill. 5.9]. The third wall contains large oil canvases, where outlined figures fight their way through a muddy ground of green shades. The museum appears to be showing how Frandsen was testing a little bit of everything at that stage at a rapid pace. The question however is whether the museum's selection of items reduces Frandsen's production to too few works, thus making it guilty of a historical misinterpretation of a young artist's beginnings. Or does the museum strengthen the conviction that the talented painter quickly found his own identity? Answering these questions with surety is difficult, because we cannot remember all of his intermediate artistic endeavours.

According to the museum, Frandsen is in full swing after his initial four years of experimenting. The museum's presentation of this part of Frandsen's journey works as an indicator to help visitors understand his subsequent work cycle, namely what they call the blockade theme. This theme is presented in a room where trays and wires are nailed to the ground, which is filled with coloured figures gesticulating wildly with their arms, legs and heads. In another room pubescent girls in yellow paintings that are fitted with small rubber rings also take up the blockade theme, which is designed to be an interpretative key to the rest of the exhibition. A silent black and white film with naked girls dancing around in a crude storehouse is being shown in this room. While we are looking at the video, a group of pre-school children come over, stop and take a look. One of them exclaims, "Look bottoms!" The teacher quickly removes the children from this part of the exhibition and encourages them to move forward. We are surprised by the teacher's reaction and perhaps also their motivation for bringing the kids to the museum. Can the children follow the indicators the museum provides or do they create completely different ones? Pursuing the answers to these questions might be interesting, but not possible in this context.



Ill. 5.9: The abstract painting covered with many salvers. This is what the museum calls 'the blockade theme' and is a central indicator in the exhibition.



Ill. 5.10: A couple in the act of looking at a couple in the act of making love. The lonely woman at the beginning of the exhibition has now met her man in the lovemaking scene. Light as blockade.

The blockade theme extends into a large room that moves the chronology ten years forward in time. The museum has written, “The motif attracts our gaze, but the traces of light block further insight”. The motif is a bed with a naked man and woman touching each other, but who are both covered [Ill 5.10]. The huge blue and black glossy photographs are covered by large mirrors that partially obstruct the view of the motif. Interwoven neon lights are placed on top of the mirrors. The photos provide evidence of how the movements and traces of the movements of their hands are transformed into traces on the photographs. The small lights fastened to the naked man and woman’s arms are clearly visible.

On one level, we understand why the museum chose the blockade theme, i.e. one thing blocking something else. The mirrors obstruct the photograph and reflect the neon tracks but also the room with the other trail of light. The visitors are mirrored in between everything else.

This cold room however moves us away from the blockade theme and away from the chronological narrative, back to the initial teaser by the stairs leading down to the exhibition. The numerous small black and white photographs of the woman with the trail of light from getting undressed and the fine small traces of light provide an indicator that is now being unfolded in the room we are standing in, which, oddly enough is called *Untitled*. Luminous moving tracks cast an explanatory light back on the stunning colours of the luminous neon globe that is the pivotal point of the exhibition.

The chronology on the perimeters of the rooms around the bright neon globe and the big mirroring cylinder switches character and provides an evolutionary tale: the couple - in love – the shared home – the family with children – and out into the world. The blockade theme, the whole idea of blocking the view of what lies behind, is fading from our view to be replaced by a great painter who paints everyday motifs of scenes recognisable to Danish families: the child with a saucepan on her head; the baby being dried after a bath; individual portraits or with family members. The paintings resemble and are family photographs, albeit not naturalistic reproductions. Clearly, what we see is a heavy magnification of the colour negatives next to the paintings, where only the colours from negatives are used as a starting point for the paintings [Ill. 5.11].



A striking feature of these paintings is their unique overwhelming colour scheme, which creates interest, opening visitors up to the wonder of familiar, stereotypical motifs, allowing them a chance to see their own families through Frandsen's paintings.

Another dominant motif in Frandsen's pictures is flowers [Ill. 5.12]. It is as though we are really sitting in Frandsen's room watching the changing floral arrangements, the displaced colours openly visible. One thinks that the paintings have a Japanese touch, caused perhaps by the surface, the brush strokes or the simplicity. The indicator we came up with was that of making traces. Physical traces are evident, but mainly it is the mental traces of the painter, who has transformed what is highly familiar to us into something that makes us look at both his paintings and daily life in a new way.

The chronology of the outside world ends with the present in the last room, which contains giant paintings and glass mosaics made after 2000 that are too large to fit anywhere but a public building. The museum's final line of text states triumphantly, "... monumental works of art for eternity". This last room is overwhelming because of the multitude of works it holds. Our impulse is to remove some of them to make it possible to see what the message really is.

The huge paintings (262 x 391 cm) are based on excellent photographs and are far better than what the museum calls "... snapshots of scenes from everyday life ...". The motifs from the artist's home and those with flowers easily conjure viewers' own stories about their families and lives. In this way the paintings' motifs are far more ambiguous and open, leading us to look for stories and ask questions. Where was it taken? It has a southern feel? And those kitsch figurines – I wonder where he found those? Why does he think they are so interesting?

A new indicator emerges, one that is thing-like and museological. Frandsen collects things. Or he paints things from collections or things that become valuable when collected, like Chinese figures and figures of the girl with the goat. But there are also giant paintings of small stuffed birds on a cut branch and a huge cherry on a green surface.

Before seeing the exhibition we read about the large glass mosaics (300 x 220 cm) and had seen small photographs of them where they appear to be snapshots [Ill 5.13]. They are most fascinating when you stand close to them and look rather nearsightedly at them, allowing you to study the many fine mosaic stones in various shades and shapes. At a distance they lose their power and become what they once started out as, namely photos. It is a paradox. Using photography as a starting point for something different and more is a common feature in Frandsen's works. In this case, however it only becomes interesting in a bad way: imagine that a photograph can be reproduced in such a lifelike way. The exhibition has taught



Ill. 5.12: The fantastically feminine, homey and familiar flower painting has a Japanese touch.

Ill. 5.11: The girl in the painting is based on adjacent colour negative.

us something different about what Frandsen's approach is. He usually works and displaces the motif and the colours. The displacement is what adds something new to recognisable motifs.

Chronology and the existential leitmotif

Chronology, central to the exhibition, is also made central to the viewer, the design of the exhibition expertly facilitating the opportunity to follow *the existential indicators*. This can be seen in the short form in Frandsen's works and their presentation. We see the artist, born in 1957, as a young man, confused, alone and searching for ways to express himself (black wooden reliefs, barriers, lead frames with pubescent girls, the couple (with lights), in the family (child with a saucepan on her head), floral images and, finally, out into the world (with mosaics)).

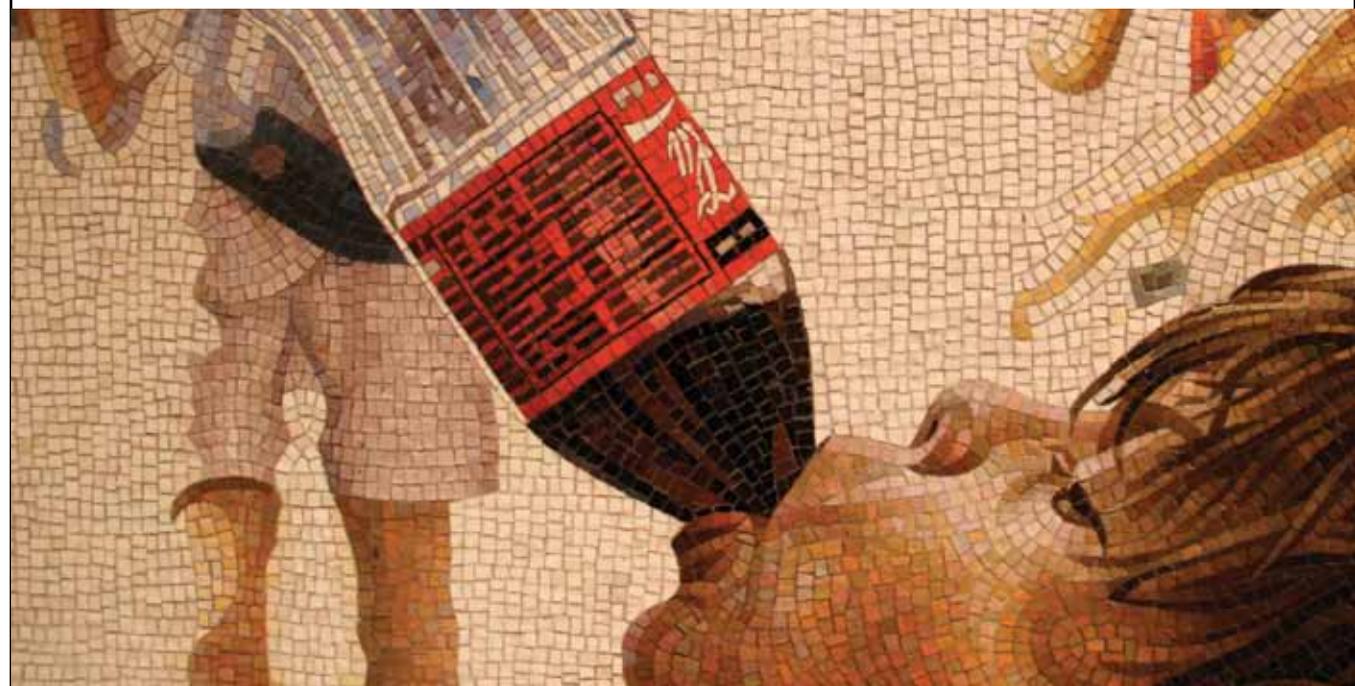
The existential indicators provide both a look at the artist and his human development in what are perhaps autobiographical works. Viewers receive not only a new perspective on their own lives but gain knowledge about their peer's lives. I remember well the turmoil of the early adult years and seeking to define my identity in many directions. Coming from a rural town I was in search of something or someone who could show me exotic new things not acknowledged in my unsophisticated hometown. It is a distinctive feature of the exhibition that its structure and content create a great deal of exceptionally personal stories and experiences for the viewer that involve issues that remain undiscussed for a long time, but that suddenly become topical in the exhibition, e.g. turning 25, the birth of one's first child, turning 32, reaching 50 etc.

Gaining a biographical or psychological understanding of the artist is not the main goal, but paradoxically the small hints in the exhibition's chronology turn into quest for parallels in one's own life or circumstances. This dialogue about Frandsen and the periods of his life provide space for the articulation of our own lives without becoming a question of identification. This space is a consequence of the dissemination approach used, which has created a chronological cycle around a spectacular space without actually being supported or displayed in the accompanying texts in each room.

We discover our urge to talk about his and our own lives and are exploring the different ways to experience the exhibition and one of them is what we call the *age leitmotiv*. Is it an exhibition for people over the age of 50 who are able to recognise the different life stages? Is the personal story in the exhibition so strong that it appeals to mature adult viewers, creating in them a desire to talk about themselves in different life stages? Are the existential indicators most closely linked to people who have some experience and who have passed a certain stage in the cycle of life? What would the exhibition communicate to a 16-year-old?



Ill. 5.13: The huge glass mosaics look like photographs at a distance and become even more fascinating when seen close up.



At the end

This analysis of the Frandsen exhibition at ARoS is framed by phenomenology and dissemination. Our aim was to conduct an experiment that meant spending a day in one exhibition and allowing the artworks, the rooms, the displays and the whole ambience to present the possible leitmotifs to us that, as Bal provocatively explains, often remain unarticulated.

We were not ordinary museum visitors who commonly spend less than an hour on an entire exhibit and who perhaps later visit another temporary exhibition and the ordinary collection. Andreas Huyssen's book, *Twilight Memories*, points out the acceleration that has affected the speed at which people pass in front of exhibition objects:

... just as in our metropolitan the flâneur ... has been replaced by the marathon runner ... the museum ... is increasingly turned into an analogue of Fifth Avenue at rush hour ... Perhaps we should expect the museum marathon as the cultural innovation of the impending fin-de siècle (1995:23).

Ane and I are also two people with different, but deep insights about art, communication and museology. Readers may wonder about the minimal amount of traditional academic writing in this chapter. By using phenomenology as the framework of our visit, our experiment and the exhibition analysis are combined with the narrativity to present the artworks, the rooms, the text and the ambience to the reader – and to push the narrative text into the foreground, thus leaving the theoretical foundation of our analysis less articulated.

The exhibition could have been analysed to explore who visitors are, what their competences are and how they perceive the actual exhibition – but the aim was to broaden the perspective by using our competences to identify a range of possible indicators that *could have* been actualised for the ordinary user in the presentation and framing of the exhibition.¹

This could-have perspective has been fruitful for our experience of the exhibition, allowing us to successfully pinpoint eight to ten leitmotifs not specifically articulated or clearly presented in the entries or textual displays designed and executed by the curator for the user. We unearthed a variety of coherent indicators, cues and leitmotifs that make the exhibition and Frandsen more meaningful and more provocative. Museologist Eilean Hooper-Greenhill believes that there is no one single way to interpret exhibitions, which thus requires having various entrances to the exhibit available:

The meanings of objects are constructed from the position from which they are viewed. The gaze of the knowing subject ... focuses

on those aspects of the object which s/he is able to recognize and thereby grasp both visually and conceptually (2000:103).

The dissemination is crucial in providing the visitor with a relevant framework. Unfamiliar with the Czech language, Bal noted that while visiting an ethnographical museum in Prague she was relegated to experiencing it only as art, because she had no other framework to refer to than the aesthetic aspect, “From ethnographic concerns, the exhibition, without moving an inch, became an art exhibition” (1996:81).

The Frandsen exhibition at ARoS left many indicators untouched and hidden, but the curator may perhaps have had another agenda. People who visit retrospective exhibition can reasonably expect to get a fair understanding of the progression of the artist's work. The presentation of Frandsen's first 15 years in the field of art is rather fragmented, failing to demonstrate how the fascinating fragments lead to who he is as a mature artist. Quantitatively most of the exhibition space is filled with artworks produced within the last ten years and especially the most recent years are overrepresented.

The ARoS agenda was perhaps to do more than just present the artist from a retrospect perspective. The museum conceivably wanted to adjust the exhibition according to Huyssen's observation that spectators in large numbers seem to be looking for emphatic experiences, instant illuminations, and stellar events that have led to, “... the current museum scene which has buried the museum as a temple for the muses in order to resurrect it as a hybrid space somewhere between public fair and department store” (1995:15).

The ARoS agenda plausibly was to promote one of its artists and attempt to sell the commodities to the public. The whole design of the exhibition underlines this scenario because it focused on the spectacular aspects fast-paced shopper wants. Thus, maintaining an interest in how the potential of the “... museal exposition, the exposure of bodies in cultural artifacts, and exposition of arguments ...” can be used to create exhibitions that are more relevant and provocative is perhaps old fashioned.

Notes

- 1 The chapters in the first Theme focus on how the exhibition constructs users or visitors who have specific competences.

Chapter 6:

The forced gazes: Home, shop, museum and IKEA

In its most banal form our visual existence takes place in a most familiar way, namely in the family home, e.g. in the living room. This chapter is based on two different rooms. One a living room in a bungalow as represented in an exhibition at the National Museum of Denmark called *Stories of Denmark 1660-2000*. The other one is a contemporary living room as presented in an IKEA store display in June 2007 in Copenhagen. Photographs, though not a target of the analysis, are used to look at these two rooms in a different way. The idea is to challenge and explore the physical space to interpret what it says about our visual existence as presented in the two exhibitions. Photographs support the dual purpose of the analytical approach, which is to look at the retail store from a museological perspective and the museum exhibition from a business perspective. In the visual culture field, the focus moves from the image itself to choice of perspective, thereby providing the materiality something social and personal.

The museum exhibition can be seen as part of the broader field of visual culture, which is not primarily - or only - images or the analysis of images. It is not the solely the media that defines the field, but also and perhaps more accurately, the interaction between the viewer and the viewed, i.e. the *visual event*. The English-American visual culture researcher, Nicholas Mirzoeff, states, "... visual culture is a tactic with which to study the genealogy, definition and functions of postmodern everyday life from the point of view of the consumer, rather than the producer" (1999:3). Mirzoeff refines his view of visual culture further by explaining that it, "... explores the ambivalences, interstices and places of resistance in postmodern everyday life ..." (1999:9).

If we accept that visual culture is a tactic, it means that that-which-is-out-there in everyday life not only is and has an essence, but also that

that-which-is-out-there can be something special. Perhaps it is a tactic because it involves ambivalence, interstices and places of resistance, pre-supposing an interaction between the viewer and the viewed. This activist concept means that what makes visual culture interesting lies not only in the visual material or in the actual authentic user situation, but in interactions between the viewed and the viewer. It also means that a key position for visual culture is the 'gaze' as an analytic strategy that forces places of resistance, prompting questions such as: How can this gaze create a new understanding of something familiar? And how can this way of thinking/seeing the world be communicated with changing intentions?

This chapter is based on an interaction. Not between the viewer and the viewed, but between three people who have agreed to visit a store, IKEA, with the aim of finding a visual culture angle on the store and its content.¹ The visit led to a fusion between the items displayed at IKEA and the exhibition of objects at a museum. It is my contention that, by shifting the gaze from the museum to the store and vice versa, it is possible to say more about "the good life" in relation to the two places and about how thinking based on visual culture can contribute to a more open, richer experience and understanding of the often invisible and unnoticed in everyday life.

From space to analytical images

The National Museum of Denmark has an exhibition of recent times (1660-2000) called *Stories of Denmark*. One of the rooms to be analysed, a living room in a bungalow, is part of this exhibition. The second room is part of an IKEA in-store display designed as a home for a nuclear family with two children as it appeared in June 2007. Interestingly, both the annual IKEA catalogue and the National Museum's website² are dominated by large colour photographs showing e.g. entire living rooms as if they were pictures taken in real houses with real furniture and where one can imagine real people living. Both rooms are as realistic as humanely possible, their authenticity loyally representing everyday life in a contemporary home and a 1970's bungalow.

There is however a second and more important point that involves the phenomenology of perception, which emphasises the role of the body in human experience. Viewers are not intended to be content with looking at just a website or catalogue pictures. The aim is for them to move in and out of the room to view the objects, coming close enough to see the texture in the fabric, wood, glass and metal. The idea is to move around and see how the different objects are located in the rooms in relation to each another and also *imagine* one's self sitting in the furniture, or even better, actually *sit* in the furniture and feel the fabric, wood etc.

The rooms lead to one embodiment, or at least one use of the body - moving around and changing positions - and therefore different perspec-

tives. The room, depending on how it is laid out, communicates a sense of either airiness or compactness that is difficult to put into words. In this chapter the phenomenological approach is used as a starting point for exploring what and how spaces and objects bear values and culture.

The photograph as the first analytical feature

Although not untidy, the rooms are somewhat chaotic due to the multitude of objects begging for attention. The general viewer's response is often to reject the room: "Is there really anything interesting here?" From a cognitive psychological angle the chaotic aspect can be seen as either a challenge or as something boring, depending on the level of familiarity and the internal contexts. Finding a *cue* is necessary to establish some sort of coherency. Initially I chose to see the room in the 1970s bungalow as a phenomenon that in a simple and recognisable way is part of a schema that can be described as 'living room'.

The first step in the analysis involved making the decision to photograph the room in a certain way to address the question 'What is interesting here?' To get behind the immediate schema of 'living room', the photos had to present the space, the living room and the objects as authentically and beautifully as possible, as though the aim were to sell the objects and the way of life presented. In general, anthropological photography is typically documentary in nature and employs the use of a tripod and flash to get as many well-lit details as possible. Even at this early stage, the choice of investigative photographic technique or strategy reflects how the analysis has already begun due to decisions made about which practices to select to do the analysis.

My photographic analytical approach is based on viewing the museum from a commodity-aesthetic perspective by:

- using only natural light to maintain the *mood* of the living room
- Shooting from a standing position
- Creating a panoramic photograph
- Hiding all signs of the outward context, e.g. signs, exhibition walls and exhibition spots
- Being honest to the objects
- Making the objects as beautiful as possible
- Creating the exhibition space as a living room

This approach is indicative of one of the overall aims of the rooms, which is to appear as though they were "real" living rooms by avoiding any outward traces of a larger exhibition space or display area.

The analytical photographic strategy arises from two approaches: one is the very spot, i.e. the rooms, the objects and their phenomenological potential; the second is the theoretical angle, resulting in the in-



Ill. 6.1: The room in the 1970's bungalow is laden with heavy, comfortable furniture. The National Museum in Copenhagen, Denmark.

tersection between the phenomenological experiences of the National Museum's 1970's living room and the IKEA living room from 2007. The living room at the museum is looked at from a commodity aesthetic gaze perspective as something to be sold and that is part of the market economy. Later in the analysis, the IKEA room will be looked at from a museological and cultural history perspective as something that communicates about people's values.

Analysis of photography

The task at hand is complicated because the print of the photograph to be used for analysis is also the room I photographed a few weeks ago that was built in 2000 but was designed to look like an authentic living room in a 1970's house in Denmark. So what do I really see? I will keep these layers of complexity in mind as I analyse the photograph [Ill. 6.1].

The 1970s room in the picture is dominated by large, heavy furniture comprising two sofas and an armchair. The central piece of furniture is a large tile-topped coffee table with steel legs reachable from all seating positions and *not* the television, which is relegated to the corner, an impractical spot making comfortable viewing for everyone seated almost impossible. Although functionality is important, the main purpose of the room is for people to have a good time together, which is clearly reflected in the decor, e.g. the solid brown, orange and red candles in the brown stoneware dish from Bornholm and the coarse, conspicuously striped brown and beige upholstery on the well-stuffed sofas and chairs. There is also a red and black shag rug under the coffee table and three shag pillows strewn on the furniture.

The home, in this case the living room, is an important reflection of the owner's status and identity, much like a brand. It is also a stage upon which people present and promote themselves. The objects in the picture depict and represent what the good life is and who has the good life. Analysing the values displayed in the image of the room is quite difficult. The anthropological approach is to let these values appear through the people who buy the furniture and design the living room (see e.g. White Berg 1989). This approach also shows the potential that lies in the presentation of objects as signs open to interpretation and identification.

According to the photograph, the good life means gathering around a table lit by the only light in the room. Two copper lamps spread light onto the coffee table, some of it spilling into the room, thus creating a warm light and gentle ambience enhanced by a cushy sofa ensemble in muted brown and beige tones. With its deep chairs, the room invites you to sit with a cup of coffee to be together and talk, not play cards or other games. Six people can sit around the table, but what about guests? The number of seats, six, perhaps indicates that the family only has one child, hence leaving space for at least three guests.

The clunky furniture is also an expression of luxury, not because the furnishings are luxurious in themselves, but because having such large furniture is only possible if there is plenty of space. The furniture is placed tightly together around the shag rug and tile-topped table. The walls are decorated with various pictures, plates and a single photograph, all hung in a rather random manner. The photo, graced with a thin gold frame, is important and is perhaps the most important official photograph in a family's life - namely, the wedding picture. A classic photo of the wedding couple, the bride in white on the left and the groom in black on the right, confirms who this interior is for: a family and not young people who recently moved away from home. The wedding photo, which is in no way highlighted by the room's lighting, hangs noticeably alone, almost in darkness, which is in contrast to other decorative objects such as the pillows. On the couch, the two completely identical bright orange shag pillows with a strong diamond pattern have a primeval feel that blends well with the Viking-like pattern on the surface of the coffee table. These two pillows are in stark contrast to the light-coloured old-fashioned pillow finely embroidered with romantic flowers and birds that they flank.

The most significant visual element is the painting or lithograph of a half-naked gypsy girl placed predominantly over the middle of the sofa. As the main decorative element, its naturalistic style is powerful but in a different way than the shag pillows. The painting is almost transparent, offering a look straight into the reality or the dream of something wild, natural and exotic. This living room speaks of romance and romantic dreams coupled with a touch of something wild and different. The room contains elements that are familiar to many Danes, but it also has deficiencies.

The room is clearly being presented to someone who is alien to it. The wedding picture and pillows etc. are clearly personal items, but our familiarity with the genre helps us immediately identify that many of the objects are also impersonal: the candles are unused; there are no newspapers, magazines or books; no toys, used coffee cups or playing cards. There is not even a single plant. Other missing objects that come to mind are: a bookcase, a corner shelf for knickknacks and commemorative items. Thus with regard to visitors unfamiliar with a typical 1970s Danish living room, the creation of identity is weakened.

Finally, the fourth wall is missing. The photograph was taken where a wall might have been or where the living room continued, leaving room for a door or window. The missing fourth wall turns the living room into a naturalistic theatre where the actors are not permitted to look at the audience. There is a parquet floor with black markings indicating the edge of the room, the only specific sign that we are in a museum.

All of the objects in the living room can be bought in a store, which means they have a utility function and a commodity-aesthetic signal val-

ue linked to everyday life. Post-war thriftiness and restricted housing had transformed into a period of economic growth in which new, much larger dwellings with completely new standards for quality and comfort had sprung up. Being able to demonstrate one's surplus of space and money and translating it into new furniture and familiar styles has symbolic value.³ The photo of this exhibition showing a living room defines viewers as buyers who have to ask the dealer about what the objects cost or what the entire sofa ensemble runs as there are no price tags. The setup allows viewers to see themselves as a family with the economic wherewithal to develop themselves.

The commodity-aesthetic perspective is that, phenomenologically speaking, one can force the analytical gaze to be one-that-buys. Those who buy are directed towards creating something new and personal for themselves in the near future. A functional problem must be solved by creating a cosy place to converse that can be realised in a large variety of ways. One-that-buys imposes upon themselves an otherness, which can become almost unbearable. It is one thing to look at the choices others make and how they act and present their ideas about the good life, another thing is actually putting oneself in their situation and to seriously consider buying the three-piece furniture suite and other paraphernalia for one's own living room. Would I really let this room represent what the good life is to me? How does what I see differ from my own values?

What creates ambivalences, interstices, places of resistance or opposing moods and emotions is what falls outside what is 'normal' or 'accepted'. In this case, the phenomenological insistence on putting values in parentheses is vital, because detaching myself from any discomfort about what is not nice during my analysis is impossible, because the "... fashion aesthetic sits on the retina" (Skak-Nielsen 1989:67). Ingrained in our mind's eye are the period from forty years ago and the period of the current analysis, both of which are multiplied by several layers of fashion, as looked at according to Bourdieu's concept of taste, but also several counter-culture and anti commodity-aesthetic values. The premise for the moments of resistance and the ambivalent feelings is that it was possible to allocate this space and this photograph decisive *attention* (see chapter 7).

The museum gaze: objects gain value through conservation

Attention is a prerequisite for an experience. But experience is not necessary for something to be assigned a value. One can only briefly wonder how objects gain enough value to slip into a museum for eternity. Quite pragmatically, identifying *unique* objects, where only the original exists is easy. Conversely, there are also items that are representative, e.g. a handmade sanded stone axe made of flint that exists in multiple exam-

ples. But how does a cola bottle get value? Or a black plastic garbage bag? (See Moore 1997). Or a room in IKEA? Before addressing these questions I will examine the consequences of the musealisation of objects. One of the first consequences of musealisation is that objects lose their natural setting and will subsequently be permanently included in a collection, frozen in time by future exhibitions. They are things of the past; they get value (Baxandall 1991).

Is the store display at IKEA looked at from a musealisation perspective? Does this perspective turn it into something we cannot buy, but that we can look at as a representation of a particular way of thinking about home and the good life? Outside the display there is a large photograph of a man, a woman and their two 8-10-year-old boys that openly and clearly presents an idea of a typical family that might actually live in these 122 m². One aspect that is not entirely typical is that the father apparently has a different ethnic background than Danish. This visual representation makes assumptions about its audience, who will perhaps better be able to identify themselves as one-of-them or one-of-the-other because of this factor. This family constellation also expresses openness and tolerance for what is not commonly seen in Denmark [see Ill. 6.2].

Analytic photography with a distance

Musealisation comprises a built-in distance. We experience the impulse to identify with the picture, but we also wish to create a distance by putting a new layer on the experience itself and the pragmatic use of it by looking and searching for what makes these objects into something special in a non-everyday situation. Doing so requires dual actions: looking closely to find striking details that are meaningful and explanatory, and creating a large distance that puts all of the details into a whole. Progressing through the analysis may reveal that a different strategy is required.

Similar to previously, my analytical photographic approach, which is based on a musealisation way of looking at the objects as commodities, involves:

- Using a flash to get sharp, clear details
- Shooting from multiple positions
- Taking pictures at several distances: close, nearby and far away
- Making all signs of the outward context clearly visible, e.g. signs, display walls and display spots
- Constructing a situation
- Constructing a clinical gaze
- Creating a space - like the exhibition - as an expression of the overarching strategy to produce the constructed space as part of a larger exhibition.



Ill. 6.2: IKEA exhibition photographed on 13 June 2007 at 10:33 AM.

The title on the beam is "Welcome to our home".

There is a temporal aspect of any exhibit: the time between the production of the original object and its installation and then there is the temporally displaced moment when viewers see the exhibition. This analytical slant is provocative, because cultural history exhibitions generally use time to create distance. Exhibiting the 1950s is easier than exhibiting the present, because a natural selection of objects over time has taken place.

Analysis of the photographs

A widely used approach among museums that dates back to world exhibitions in the 1800s in London and Paris involves the interior principle, which means creating exhibitions in realistically depicted environments (Skougaard 2005:103-105). At IKEA, the time period is the present and the objects are new or recently manufactured. Applying the somewhat uncertain selection criteria that turn objects into museum objects is difficult. The criteria could be prioritising unique items over general ones; the representative over the divergent; or craftsmanship over industrial production. As an analytical approach however I can claim that this is selected and musealised, and look at what meaning is possible to extract out of the display [Ill. 6.2].

The display-cum-exhibition at IKEA has a number of different built-in forms of knowledge. The first room has a corner sofa that draws our attention away from the multitude of objects visible in the photograph. Then there is the linguistic anchoring of the entire exhibition. A beam stretching across the room invitingly states: *Welcome to our home* and anchors the entire exhibition linguistically. This supplemented by a marketing sign to the right showing a family picture with the same title, nearly leading the viewers' attention from the home to its potential. Just under the family photograph is a floor plan of the visible part of the exhibition and what we can expect to see. Below this is a red square with white lettering that highlights how big the apartment is. The 122 m² floor plan is clearly reflected in the life-size physical space and the clear demarcation between the light wood floor of the apartment and the store's ordinary dark linoleum floor.

The four meta comments set the scene for what could become a narrative. A column of three boxes on a sign set the scene for the possible story and communicate through a sequence of iconic, indexical and symbolic visual elements. The next part of this chapter describes the different visualities of the three boxes from top to bottom [Ill. 6.3].

The first image in the sequence is a photograph of a family that is by no means an ordinary snapshot taken by another family member. The background is completely neutral while the photo is closely cropped and stripped of any unimportant elements and devoid of the blurriness, lack of cropping and spontaneity most often evident in casual pictures. The

Ill. 6.3: Sign column with sequence of three boxes.



family portrait does not show neatly lined up family members radiating introspective kindness. The communication is aggressive and greatly aware of the beholder. The text says "Welcome to our home" but the compositional energy of the photo rests in the boys' pointing fingers, which echo the famous poster of Uncle Sam used to recruit soldiers for both World War I and II that states, "We want you".⁴ In this case however it is not the US government authoritatively ordering me to obey a command. The family comprises three males with open-mouthed smiles and a female who smiles less enthusiastically with a closed mouth. Presumably in their mid-thirties and no longer studying, they have two children and an active life. The iconic elements of the photograph connect communicatively to similar images. The indexical features partly connect the image to our generalised understanding of the schema, which places two adults, one of each sex, with two children in the schema of a nuclear family, and partly to these specific unnamed people for whom we can easily construct a background, e.g. their occupations.

The second image in the sequence is a floor plan for the apartment, perhaps hastily drawn by an architect for the family but with each room clearly labelled. Cartoon researcher Scott McCloud explains that the space between two images in a sequence is the point at which something interesting arises and in this case it is the interaction between the photo and the floor plan (1993). There are two interactive processes that take place in the relationship between images and pictures and space and viewer. One process simply involves placing the four people where we think they fit in the rooms on display, a bedroom for each of the two boys, one for the parents and perhaps an office. The second process is to create a connection between the abstract sketch of the floor plan and the actual physical spaces (the kitchen and the office) located just beside the sign with the three pictures. There is an alternation between the predominantly indexical floor plan and the iconic physical space.

The third picture is a red square that functions as an exclamation point for the entire history and serves as an answer to the questions that arise when visitors look at the sequence of pictures. The answer to how big is this home is 122 m².

The central point is that the meta comments at the IKEA display-cum-museum exhibition of a living room from 2007 creates not only the narrative elements but also the actual exhibit of the room, thus allowing for the production of a narrative and identification.

The people

The general story is about people and the importance of their home to them and that they have a home. Here, home is everything: the kitchen, bedroom, office and living room. The vision presented puts people as a starting point that is reflected in the musealisation criteria central to the collection of objects, where knowing the communicative significance the objects have for the user is important, i.e. what the user likes/dislikes and how the objects have pleased and preoccupied the user (Steen 1999). Most of all however it is perhaps the criterion of collecting and exhibiting the typical and common as entire cohesive environments that is important (Silver Garnert 1991).

The most common, typical aspect of the representation of the environment is how the musealisation perspective is frozen, deprived of a future and any kind of development. Another general feature is how white, light and smooth the objects in the exhibition are. The consistent use of shades of white makes everything highly coherent and uniform, punctuated only by a few dark pillows on the sofa decorated with a bit of dark green, gold, and subdued purple. A white bookcase contains a variety of books and numerous white cases and boxes with lids as well as wicker baskets, all designed to hold many, many things.

The white unifies everything, turning it into a large cohesive mass

that creates a neutral, all-enveloping conglomeration of tables, bookcases, sofas and boxes, which in turn create a space and a background for human life and activity. There are some magazines about parents and children on the coffee table in front of the couch, evidence that the adults may have sat there and watched their flat screen TV. Picturing two active, outgoing boys sitting with muddied clothes from a football game on the light coloured couch eating chips, cola and chocolate is difficult.

The minimalism and whiteness of the room stand in opposition to the family portrayed by the display, because the room lacks the presence of memorable personal items. One item that breaks this pattern is an abstract print on the wall whose colour scheme matches the pillows on the couch. One can easily imagine that IKEA's customers like the room, but the question is can it make them happy or worry them.

One fundamental value communicated by this room is the primacy of a democratic approach to the design in the sense that the use of white blurs social and cultural differences and causes neither joy nor worry. The room does not gain a personal identity until it is populated by people. Having a room like this is for everyone from all social strata and from all ethnic groups. The bright space is a multicultural meeting place.

Two forced perspectives

The point of this chapter is that *forcing* the eye makes it possible to force ambivalences, interstices and places of resistance. In the context of the living rooms, forcing the eye has two dimensions. First, there is the conscious choice to see the exhibition at the museum as a store display of objects that are part of a capitalist way of appreciating them - or to see the store display as a museum exhibition, where appreciation of the items involves a set of values that comprise cultural choices and exhibition practices (Floris & Vasström 1999:77). The second dimension is that the phenomenological experience and spatial understanding are expanded due to the analytical photographic strategy used that forms a central part of the analysis of two selected sites. This approach can easily be seen as a Brechtian alienation strategy because it makes known the less known and obvious, but also because it takes the photographic practice seriously based on a number of photographic choices.

Our visual existence becomes visible in the analysis of the photographs of the two rooms, the rather obvious comparison of the two rooms also revealing something about the person doing the analyses in a concrete, direct way. Hiding behind the proverbial fig leaf is not possible, because the photographic practice inherently contains an openness to the values the researcher brings with him. The visual event is the interaction between the viewer and the viewed, producing an encounter that is both naturalistic and analytical. The visual event *is* the analytical encounter.

Notes

- 1 The three professors were Helen Illeris, curator Stine Høholt and Bruno Ingemann. At the time we were all part of a visual culture network.
- 2 <http://www.natmus.dk/sw19052.asp>
- 3 One's individual knowledge and competences can add more context to the analysis to anchor the implied connotations. The two people in the wedding photo are Elni [b. 1952) and Tage (b. 1945), who moved into a new detached house built by a local builder in the little town of Benløse. Married in 1973, they bought their new striped sofa ensemble in a shop in Ringsted the same year. Tage made the shag rug and pillows himself. An exhibition sign describes the living room as: "Parcel houses and the nuclear family: from 1960-1979 915,000 new homes were built and 450,000 of them were detached. Higher incomes, often earned by both the man and the woman, mortgage tax breaks and inflation made it possible for many people to buy their own homes".
- 4 The British recruiting poster from 1914 with Lord Kitchener pointing his finger reads: *Your Country Needs You*.

Questions - Experience and learning processes

“In the beginning was – not the word – but the experience”, writes associate professor Lisa Gjedde in the first line of *Researching Experiences: Exploring Processual and Experimental Methods in Cultural Analysis*, published by her and I in 2008. Our main goal was

to find methods to overcome the gap between the experience and recounting the experience by asking:

... what experience are the users actually talking about? Is it the experience they had in the actual moment or is it the one they constructed minutes, hours, days or years afterwards? And, what is the content of the experience? We focus on capturing not just the part of the experience that can easily be verbalized, but also the pre-reflexive experience, which has not yet entered the realm of conscious expression and may never reach it (Gjedde & Ingemann 2008:1).

The questions posed in the above quote point to the complex field of experience and learning that e.g. John Falk and Lynn D. Dierking write about on the Experience Model. But in this introduction I will go further than Falk and Dierking and present a theoretical framework that goes deeper into the experience processes and also into the unconscious and creative processes of the experience. Pragmatist John Dewey describes what we broadly

call experiences as mainly being daily practices that we do not have to make an effort to reach or that arise because of extraneous interruptions or inner lethargy. He explains that, "... we have *an* experience when the material experienced runs in course to fulfillment" (1934/1980:35). In an experience, flow is from something to something and leads to an ending as some kind of narrative. In relation to exhibitions and museums and experience, Dewey states that there is always a material point of departure for the experience:

A work of fine art, a stature, building, drama, poem, novel, when done, is much a part of the objective world as is a locomotive or a dynamo. And, as much as the latter, its existence is casually conditioned by the coordination of materials and energies of the external world (1934/1980:146).

When Dewey finds that an experience must have a materiality in the external world and that it must have some kind of narrative with an ending – he also underlines the important action of the user, "For to perceive, a beholder must create his own experience. And his creation must include relations comparable to those which the original producer underwent" (Dewey 1934/1980:54). Dewey indicates that the user has an obligation to be open and give as much attention as possible to follow the producer of the exhibition and not to be disobedient or get other peculiar ideas and thoughts. In other words, to not be too creative.

How – handling an experience

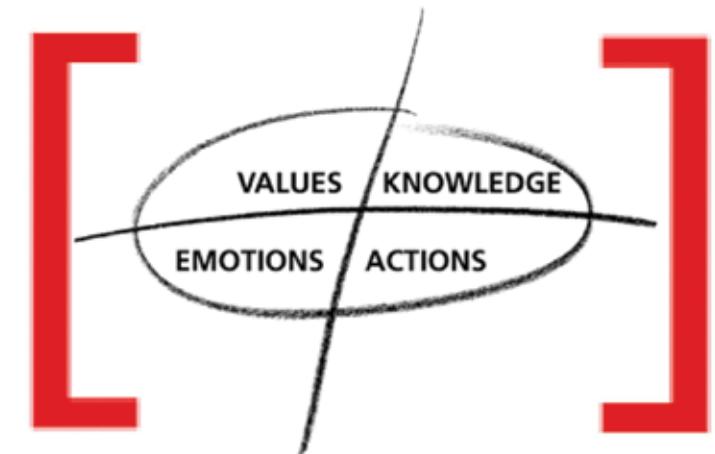
Based on our research on the construction of the experiences of visitors at exhibitions and museums or with webart and interactive media, we realised that we needed an increasingly detailed framework for experiences and based on our fieldwork we constructed a theoretical framework inspired by British psychologist Frederick Bartlett and his work with narrative structures and memory (Gjedde & Ingemann 2008:99-114).

The Attention Model consists of the four fields of experience: values, emotions, knowledge and actions! [Ill. 7.1]. Our book describes the model as follows:

Attention is directed by the person-in-situation in daily life. John Dewey (1934) states that attention is that which directs the experience: Without attention, no experience. By making this claim he sorts out most of what we call experiences because we need to make a mental contribution to have an experience. Events are not in themselves experiences: The entertainment at an amusement park is not in itself an experience. You can be physically present at a noisy event and only observe the happenings and this is not what Dewey would call an experience. You need to

Ill. 7.1: The Attention Model
– (Gjedde & Ingemann 2008).

[Attention]



give attention to the situation and this attention-giving also holds the potential to create meaning about what is in front of you.

The field of values can be expanded by relating it to the work of psychologist Milton Rokeach, who has worked within this field since the 1960s. He states that, "... a value, unlike an attitude, is a standard or yardstick to guide actions, attitudes, comparison, evaluations, and justifications of self and others" (Rokeach 1968:160). He believes that there are thousands of attitudes in a person's belief system and that they are cognitively connected to around two dozen instrumental values and that they are functional and cognitively connected to fewer terminal values.

Several years later he named the following eighteen *instrumental values*: Ambition, helpfulness, capability, politeness, honesty, imagination, obedience, intellect, being loving, logic, courageousness, independence, broad-mindedness, cleanliness, responsibility, forgiveness, cheerfulness and self-control. The *terminal values* are: A comfortable life, an exciting life, a sense of accomplishment, a world at peace, equality, family security, freedom, happiness, inner harmony, mature love, national security, pleasure, salvation, self-respect, social recognition, true friendship and wisdom (Rokeach 1973).

If you are interested in, e.g. gender differences then the constructed values of men and women are important values. But what about religious values? And cultural values?

The field of emotions can be put into perspective by drawing on the works of neurologist and philosopher Antonio Damasio, who has developed a theory of emotions mainly by distinguishing between primary, secondary and background emotions. *Primary emotions* are innate emotions: Happiness, sadness, fear, anger, surprise, and disgust; *secondary emotions* are social emotions such as embarrassment, jealousy, guilt, and pride. Finally, there are *background emotions* such as well-being, malaise, calmness and tension (Damasio 2000:50ff.). Background emotions do not use the differentiated repertoire of explicit facial expressions that easily define primary and social emotions. The features of being tense or edgy, discouraged or enthusiastic, down or cheerful are detected by subtle details of body posture, speed and the contour of movements, minimal changes in the amount and speed of eye movements, and in the degree of contraction of facial muscles. What is important for us is the fact that all these different internal states are ordered along a continuum. Descartes made the error of failing to separate emotion and reason, whereas now it has been experimentally proven that reason is influenced by emotion (Damasio 2000: 57).

Mood, aesthetics and *narrative* are part of the emotional field. Users begin their experience before getting to the 'real-thing', e.g. the exhibition at the museum. In their excellent book on the museum experience, Falk and Dierking note that it does not start in the exhibition but in the foyer and even earlier in front of the museum (1992). An emotional attitude toward the whole museum is created by the physical setting, which is created by the architecture and design that includes elements such as space, colour, texture, material, line, typography, structure, layout, composition – and, at times, dramaturgy and the placement of contrasting or commenting elements.

The narrative can be understood in a dual way. Narrative is often presented in the work, video, exhibition, or magazine, which tell a story by using the above mentioned elements, but also by using characters, plot, conflicts and solution in the creation. In addition to these aspects, users combine the complex elements they encounter in the work to create meaning out of chaos. In this process, the narrative is used to construct meaning, after which users make their experience available to the researcher by telling the stories they constructed in order to make meaning.

The field of knowledge refers to the cognitive content of the communication. The person-in-situation gains new information about something in the process of perception and also relates this to what she already knows since one cannot gain new knowledge without relating it to old

knowledge. Geoff Loftus and John Palmer, as mentioned earlier, describe this as a process of combining information from different sources, stating, "Two kinds of information go into one's memory for some complex occurrence. The first is information gleaned during the perception of the original event; the second is external information supplied after the fact. Over time, information from these two sources may be integrated in such a way that we are unable to tell from which sources some specific details are recalled. All we have is one 'memory'" (Loftus & Palmer 1974:585-589).

While there is reflection going on during the situation, in a dialogue with the user about what they experience, and also in the choices they make, another level of reflection can be triggered by making informants review the experience and comment on it after it has been completed. This means that the researcher can make use of designing what we call a 'reflection gap' in the process of creating a framework for reflection and obtain some distance to the full experience.

Recordings of the person-in-situation on video or audio allows one to listen to quotations from the mediated experiences, and fragments of words and sentences that have made such an impression that they have been integrated into the spontaneous talk. In the interview conducted after experiencing the work, these video and audio recordings are presented to the person-in-situation as important retrieval cues that can help the informant remember and produce knowledge. This knowledge contains the new knowledge, the old knowledge and the external knowledge gained after the original event or maybe in the process of reflection interview.

The field of actions presents the person-in-situation engaging with the body in a reflective and pre-reflective mode. It also relates to the potential of reflection-in-action (Schön 1983), where your actions are expressive of an underlying knowledge of "thinking with your feet", of artful doing based on your immediate experience of the situation. The field of actions is often explored by asking informants to make choices, either by choosing and ranking artefacts or by navigating physical or virtual spaces.

In all our social relations we use our body to create the distances of intimacy and distance, trust and power. Edward Hall's (1966) proxemic theory shows that this body language is culturally created but also in its daily use rather unconscious but effective.

If, for instance, you stand alone in an art gallery in a big room and another person enters the room, you are aware that she is there. If you move towards her and place yourself a half a meter from her, then she could apprehensively choose to move away because you may have violated this person's personal zone by exceeding her safe distance.

The semiotician Edward T. Hall demonstrates that we have un-

conscious barriers that determine how close we allow other people to come to us and our bodies, explaining that, "... each one of us has a form of *learned* situational personalities. The simplest form of the situational personality is that associated with responses to intimate, personal, social, and public transactions" (Hall 1996:115).

Hall finds that 'close personal distance' is the distance where, "one can hold or grasp another person" and defines it as "the distance of the erotic, the comforting and protection". If someone we are not intimate with comes too close, we experience it as aggression. Hall defines 'far personal distance' as the distance that, "extends from a point that is just outside easy touching distance by one person to a point where two people can touch fingers if they both extend their arms", a distance where "subjects of personal interests and involvements are discussed" (120). The boundary between the far phase of personal distance and the close phase of social distance marks the 'limit of dominants'.

Another type of distance that Hall defines is 'close social distance', which begins just outside this range and is the distance at which impersonal business interaction occurs. People who work together tend to use close social distance. The distance to which people move when somebody says, "Stand back so I can look at you" is defined as 'far social distance'. Business and social interaction conducted at this distance has a more formal and impersonal character than in the close phase. Finally, 'public distance' is outside the circle of involvement and is connected to representative occasions" (Gjedde & Ingemann 2008:158).

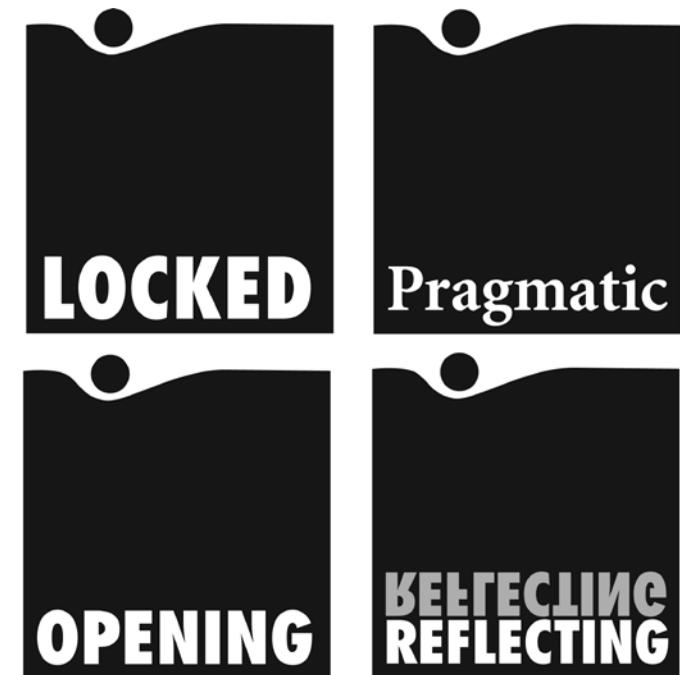
The four fields are analytical tools to guide the researcher on how to observe and talk about the action, the emotions, the values and the knowledge created during an experience.

Why are experiences so important?

It may easily be accepted that *attention* is necessary for the visitor to create *an* experience and learning. But why do visitors find it at all necessary to invest energy and especially time to look at an exhibition? There must be something that determines this other than just the topic of the exhibition or the design of the exhibition room. The HOW fields are theorised in the Attention Model and the WHY perspectives are theorised as the four gazes in *The Reading Strategies* [Ill. 7.2]:

A theory of reading strategies and the values that are important to the reader needs to include the aesthetic and referential in relation to topic, expression and content; it needs to include the personally relevant and previous knowledge; it needs to capture that the actual readers' values are not constant but are fluctuating all the time and through the reading act there is a shift between different reading strategies. The theoretical frame gathers the aesthetic, the referen-

Ill. 7.2: The Four Gazes:
Reading Strategies (Gjedde & Ingemann 2008).



tial, knowledge-related and emotional elements in four gazes: The Locked Gaze; The Opening Gaze; The Pragmatic Gaze and The Reflecting Gaze. (Gjedde & Ingemann 2008:19 & 69-73).

The four gazes: Reading strategies

The theory of the *four gazes* was initially developed in relation to photography and then later applied to museum exhibitions. We have been asked many questions concerning the scope of the theory, the difference between gaze and look, the objects looked at and what consequences the theory has for the development of appraising the thinking of the *person-in-situation*. We can start with a rather different concept of the gaze. In their excellent book on photography, *Reading National Geographic*, Catherine Lutz and Jane Collins state that photographs, "... are objects at which we look" and they continue, "The photograph has its quality because it is usually intended as a thing of either beauty or documentary interest and surveillance" (1993:188).

Lutz and Collins have a critical view of the 'gazes', looking only at the formal features of the photograph alone, stating, "... we will argue that the lines of gaze perceptible in the photograph suggest the multiple forces

at work in creating photographic meaning, one of the most important of which is reader's informed interpretive work" (188).

In their research on *National Geographic* photos, they identify the following seven gazes: *The Photographer's Gaze*, which represents the camera's eye and all the formal characteristics like point-of-view, sharpness, angle, framing etc.; *The Magazine's Gaze*, including the editorial choices involved at the start of an assignment, editing the pictures and stories etc.; *The Magazine Readers' Gazes* is seen mostly as the actual readers in the personal, educational and social pre-destination and subjectivity; *The Non-western Subject's Gaze* is how and where the subject in the photograph is looking: at the photographer, another subject in the frame, into the distance etc.; *The Direct Western Gaze* actually shows white Western travellers in a local setting in relation to the natives; *The Reflected Gaze of the Other*, where the native sees themselves as others see them, e.g. as shown in a photograph or in a mirror; and, finally, *The Academic Spectator*, an extension of the reader's gaze that represents the authors' racial, national and educational backgrounds.

They define the photograph as an intersection of gazes, but even they are critical, looking only into the content and formal qualities of the photographs. Even if they stress the importance of the reader's interpretive work, they tend to analyse the photographs themselves as signs or tokens of the multitude of gazes.

When looking into readers' responses, they quote the findings of Tamar Liebes and Elinu Katz (1990) from their reception studies of the television series *Dallas* in such differing countries as Israel, Japan and the United States. They categorise their responses as *lucid* (playful), *aesthetic* (focused on the show's artfulness or genre faithfulness), *moral* (passing judgment on characters' behaviour), and *ideological* (concerned with latent, manipulative messages inserted by the show's producers).

Looking at how fifty-five Americans react to the twenty photographs taken out of context to make them clarify the attitude toward the native in the non-Western photographs, Lutz and Collins conclude that in their readers' preferences and identification, "... play and aesthetics are paramount" (1993:269). This way of thinking about the Gazes involves more than just *looking*. It is more than mere perception, where the eye just looks at the objects in front of it, namely the photograph. I agree with the above construction of gazes, but believe something is missing.

First of all, the idea of locating the meaning in the picture itself is rather problematic, but can be divided into three elements of transaction, the first of which is what I call the appearance of mediated reality. The second element of transaction is the attention and involvement of the reader, the viewer or the user to give mental energy and respond to the appearance in the form of approval, joy, fear, boredom etc. The third element of transaction between the person and the object is the goal one

has to be entertained, to become a valuable citizen or to create a good life for oneself (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton 1981:175).

The three transactional elements are *appearance*, the mental *involvement* and the *goal* of the person – and this is seen by a third person looking at a *person-in-situation*.

These transformational elements are the foundation for my creation of the four gazes as informed by the research process of my *Mirage_Project* in analysing the complex material of ranking and talking about news photographs (Gjedde & Ingemann 2008:13-34). The decisive point became not to look at the photographs in themselves as bearers of gazes or into the psychological aspect of the individual, but to look at the gazes as reflectional constructions where the intentions of the pictures and their senders and the intention of the reader or user melts together into reading strategies. These gazes cannot be consciously explained by the user in themselves, but they are constructed in the reader's use of her body and in the user's dialogue or in the telling taking place during the interview and that can be analysed afterwards.

This means that what becomes the material to be look at will be some kind of mediation in the research practice that can be prepared in advance: The situation – the recording – the analysis – are the headlines for the projects, where one can go into the process of finding how the four gazes – the reading strategies - are active and what role they perform in the creation of meaning.

When analysing interview material where informants have been looking at mediated material, the four gazes can of course be used. Clarifying the intention to do so beforehand makes the process clearer and the findings richer. Now it is time to make some reflections and decisions about the situational, the recordings and the analytical process. Here, we want to further develop the formulation of the four gazes in the process of finding topics or themes to focus on.

The reflecting gaze focuses on the picture used as a mirror – not of reality but of the user in terms of inclusion or exclusion:

Identification with the situation, the person in the picture, i.e. 'This is exactly like me, like I feel, like I want to be'

I – the other is more value driven to find and distance itself from the unknown, the strange and the weird in words of disgust and distrust, but also the opposite of fascination, longing and closeness.

The pragmatic gaze focuses on what the reader can learn from the media and what can be of practical use:

Relevance is highly important in determining the pragmatic use of the picture or the information, i.e. is it useful in daily life to solve practical problems? Useful in the everyday world as practical knowl-

edge? Or useful knowledge in society to act as a responsible citizen? *Explicit* is an urge to have the information made unambiguous and clearly contextualised, to be told what to do with the information.

The locked gaze focuses on the photograph as a categorical picture that is a stereotype and primarily confirms the schemes the reader already has:

Categorical is the overall way of understanding by finding similarities to what the user already knows and avoiding and rejecting any disturbances in the appearances.

Referential is meaning in the informational content of the photograph or other media products leading to high trust, i.e. seeing is believing.

The opening gaze focuses on the photograph that in itself has inherent qualities and demands an open-minded attitude from the reader:

Poetic adds important aesthetic aspects to the appearance to expand the experience of the content.

Emotional can be surprising and sometimes provocative but is always part of the response to the actual experience.

In an actual project, these reading strategies have to be broken down into detailed, more concrete questions that need to be on the researcher's agenda as themes in the questions to be asked about the situation and in the analytical situation. The intersection of reading strategies is important to stress. As research tools they can be used to look into the actual dialogue and gestures and then in the interview to find the ever changing use of different reading strategies.

I have now presented the theory of *The Four Gazes: Reading Strategies* without relating it particularly in relation to exhibitions and museums because this will be unfold in one of the following chapters in this section. Here I will stress that the theory of the four gazes can be used to analyse and discuss questions about why people come to exhibitions and why they sometimes feel themselves excluded and other times they feel animated. They come with a motivation, a goal and knowledge and these preconditions determine their experience and learning as something placed in their daily lives.

- and now to learning

I am interested in what or how visitors learn during an exhibition and I am not talking about learning from a specific theoretical point of view, but from the way the person-in-situation experiences the exhibition and the learning related to the creation of meaning. In their book about the experience of learning, Ference Marton and Shirley Booth summarise the six concepts of learning as follows (1997: 38):

Learning as **primarily reproducing**

A ... increasing one's knowledge

B ... memorising and reproducing

C ... applying

Learning as **primarily seeking meaning**

D ... understanding

E ... seeing something in a different way

F ... changing as a person

Conceptualising how learning is experienced does not bring us closer to the actual situation where the experience takes place. We can, however, draw on the research of Gaea Leinhardt and Karen Knutson concerning the use of conversation analysis in the museum setting. They propose that informal learning processes can be seen in the conversation that occurs between two people, e.g. in a museum. They examine the structure of the conversation and identify five structural codes: *list*, *personal synthesis*, *analysis*, *synthesis* and *explanation* (2004:84). And they define the learning that is constituted within these structures as, "... what a group talks about, it thinks about... what is remembered is learned" (2004:159).

The overall tendency here is not to prove whether mediated material is useful for communicating a rather clear and intentional message, but that the whole way of thinking within a social-cultural theory is that what is experienced, and especially talked about, is also learned.

Chapter 8 – Museums are good to think with

– focuses on three concepts various scholars have used to approach the relationship between the exhibition and the visitor. British sociologists Gordon Fyfe and Max Ross do not explore the museum and the visitor but focus on the informant's leisure and class consciousness - and then involve the museum's role in the informant's creation of *social identity*.² John H. Falk and Lynn D. Dierking are preoccupied with whether we can actually *learn* something concrete at a museum and especially how memories of exhibitions are recalled over time.

My approach is to examine how an exhibition is experienced while it takes place and then to add the informant's reflection-in-action, i.e. how selected visitors at an exhibition talk with and about what they see and experience. This leads to a discussion of experience, learning and social identity in relation to the visitor and their experience of being included or excluded by the museum.

The three subsequent chapters take a detailed look at actual visitor experiences and learning in a cultural history exhibition, an art exhibition and a multimedia artwork about Nordic mythology. In order to study

the person-in-situation and their experiences, they were videotaped as they moved through the exhibitions and artworks. The methodology behind this analysis of person-in-situation is fully presented in *Researching Experiences: Exploring Processual and Experimental Methods in Cultural Analysis*.

Chapter 9 – Person-in-situation (1) – Experience and strategy

– analyses a young woman’s visit to an exhibition in Copenhagen on democracy in the city. The analysis focuses on how her goals and previous knowledge guide her selections and dialogue with her friend as well as her exploration of the exhibition. The frame of the analysis is *The Four Gazes* reading strategies and how they make it possible to get a deeper look into what is experienced and learned. The young woman focuses on creating herself in relation to time and personal experiences, but she also overestimates the role of design as a topic in a somewhat awkward but well-argued way.

Chapter 10 – Person-in-situation (2) – Experience and questioning

– examines the visit of two men, one old and one young, at an art exhibition on a famous Danish artist named Ole Sparring. Actively searching after a framework to embed the experience of the artwork in, the two men turn the whole visit into a learning environment. Instead of relying solely on art history, they introduce knowledge and experience from their daily lives. In addition they unconsciously try to transform the artworks and the ambience of the exhibition into a shared narrative with a beginning, middle and end. Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson’s theories (1990), as related to the Attention Model, frame this chapter.

Chapter 11 – Person-in-situation (3) – Experience and interaction

– looks at the complexity of interactive multimedia in the context of the exhibition. The framework of possibilities is met by the users with confusion but also guided by the social interaction between pairs of users. Their dialogue and what they wonder about are influenced by their bodily actions and their knowledge of each other. Surprisingly the informants were highly aware of the social environment and also influenced by being in public, i.e. by the fact that others could see their choices and hear what they talked about. The learning process thus went beyond the topic of the interactive film on Nordic mythology. In this complex setting the narratives were the approach that guided the users and the researchers.

Chapter 12 – What is the question? Creating a learning environment in the exhibition

– attempts to uncover if it is possible to create curiosity and reflection at a science centre by stimulating and facilitating dialogue. The background for this approach was the vast amount of studies showing that free-choice and unstructured school trips result in little (if any) student reflection. The simple method used involved presenting a clear question to the students that put them in the role of the researcher or explorer whose goal was to examine many daily happenings framed by science. We found that in addition to facilitating curiosity and reflection, the approach helped the students have a good recollection of the visit one year later and that they had applied the insights gained from their visit. Thus, a dialogical approach constitutes a fruitful tool at science centres and most likely also in the context of other museums such as art museums.

Chapter 13 – Speaking places, places speaking – A transvisual analysis of a site

– examines learning from the point of view of a creative production of an exhibition. The chosen site is Paris, or more specifically, sites where there are McDonalds’ locations in Paris. This chapter introduces the analysis of a site not only by using words but also by transforming the complexity of the physical surroundings, houses, streets, places, cars and people into digital photographs. This new transvisual analysis reveals surprising aspects of Parisianness and of values and knowledge of the producer as the final series of pictures is selected, mounted and presented in the context of an exhibition. The learning that takes place involves not only the content of the site but also what the practitioner learns as seen through the framework of Donald Schön’s reflection-in-action.

Notes

- 1 Gjedde and Ingemann 2008:73-120.
- 2 Informant denotes the person participating in the video-walk.

Chapter 8:

Museums are good to think with

What happens when two visitors come to a museum to see an exhibition? Is it pure experience and identification or do they learn something? This chapter discusses the two main components of the encounter between the visitor and the museum. One component is the framework of possibilities the exhibition offers and the other is the Exhibitions offer physical and mental input that allows visitors to design and develop the opportunities available in an exhibition, but visitors also come with previous knowledge, motivation and immediate interests. An exhibition is like a Chinese box where the framework of possibilities of the exhibition meets the framework of possibilities of the visitor over a certain period of time, namely the amount of time visitors have to create their exhibition. The type of investigation carried out in this chapter goes beyond the usual interest in issues such as who visits museums and how often.

I will focus on three concepts a variety of scholars have used to approach the relationship between the exhibition and the visitor. The work of these researchers shares common features such as using qualitative methods and finding an interesting topic that may inspire museum practitioners in their future work.

British sociologists do not explore the museum and the visitor but focus on the informant's leisure and class consciousness – and then involve the museum's role in the informant's creation of *social identity*.¹ John H. Falk and Lynn D. Dierking are preoccupied with whether we can actually *learn* something concrete at a museum and especially how memories of exhibitions are recalled over time.

My approach is to examine how an exhibition is experienced while it takes place and then to add the informant's reflection-in-action, i.e. how selected visitors at an exhibition talk with and about what they see and experience. Three keywords mark the differences in my epistemolog-

ical interests in contrast to those of the aforementioned scholars: social identity, learning and experience.

Social identity mediated by the museum

In their article, “Decoding the visitor’s gaze: Rethinking museum visiting”, Fyfe and Ross centre on interpretations of the world associated with museum visits, particularly in relation to class, leisure and place. Their study looks at how identity and structure are mediated by the experiences gained at a museum. They chose to do their study in Stoke-on-Trent in England and randomly selected 15 families to participate. Fyfe and Ross visited and interviewed these families on topics such as their social background, leisure time, lifestyle, community and their relationship to the local area. They are eager to position their survey method in relation to traditional visitor studies, which have been “...one-sidedly qualitative methods, by questionnaire surveys and behaviourist methodologies” (1996:131). They fully agree with museologist Eilean Hooper-Greenhill in that understanding the dynamics of meaning-making at a museum requires, “...a more flexible model of research that moves beyond demographics into interpretive or ethnomethodological understandings and methods” (1988:12).

As a result they did not employ closed-ended questions, but instead invited the families to thoroughly reflect on their lives, also in Stoke-on-Kent, leisure time, social background, consumption and sense of place and time. Although the researchers were interested in finding out how museums are or are not interwoven with the lives of families as consumers of places and spaces, the topic of museum visits was not taken up until an informant raised the subject independently. Out of the 15 families, 35 people were interviewed and Fyfe and Ross’ subsequent analysis leads them to the interesting conclusion that, “museums are good to think with” (1996:148).

In their article they present three of the participating families, but focus specifically on a family called the Cardwrights. The father, 51, has a degree in electrical engineering and the mother, 41, is a teacher, while the two children attend the local primary school. They are a committed family that participates in numerous cultural activities alongside their hobbies and sports. They frequently read books on history and the father has the fundamental belief that life is one long learning process that does not end with school. Their cultural and historical knowledge are drawn together by their interest in local historic buildings and landscapes. The parents have managed to pass on their curiosity about life in the past to their children. Fyfe and Ross explain that, “This curiosity relates to self-identity and empowerment” (1996:143). Exploring/investigating local history means identifying oneself with the past and having the feeling of being part of a story that affects one’s life today. The Cardwrights are

good museum visitors, often dropping in on the local museum as part of their education strategy.

Their efforts reflect however more than just a struggle for cultural capital, because the family’s strategy is woven together with the feeling that the local community is being undermined, mainly because influential economic decisions are now made outside of the local area. The Cardwright family has a strong sense of local belonging, but it is not associated with the present. The following statement by a local conservative shop manager that reflects his outlook on the world could easily define them, “...a conservative identification with the provincial commercial virtues embodied in the ethics of traditional middle classes” (1996:144).

The family is glad for the importance of things. They see things and places as a sign of a vibrant history that provides the opportunity to disclose grand historical insights to them. They have a romantic view of history filled with emotions, ideas and empathy. They focus on the aura of authentic objects and enjoy what is unique, local and personal about them. They weight e.g. the country higher than the city; traditional shops higher than cheap supermarkets; and handcrafted items higher than industrial products.

When Fyfe and Ross conclude that, “museums are good to think with”, it is not so much the visit at a museum they focus on, as the way the family talks about their life world. Experiences involving class, childhood and school are already part of the museum’s memoirs, which will be discussed and categorised according to what Fyfe and Ross call ‘a museum gaze’.

The fact that Fyfe and Ross did not start their research by asking detailed questions about the actual objects in the museum, the concrete exhibition or the actual learning in an effort to reflect on the visitor’s experience is an exciting and radical starting point. They also do not focus on the individual but the entire family’s experience and relationships. Some of the 15 families participating in the study had never been to a museum or only very infrequently. Their methodological approach describes the museum in the context of family life, as part of their life world, but what they would really like to examine seems a bit peculiar and unclear. At the same time it is also exciting because there is an openness that encompasses both order and chaos.

Learning in the exhibition

Fyfe and Ross look at life world and social identity, but I have chosen to pay closer attention to the exhibition and the learning potential available in museums. More than a decade ago Falk and Dierking published their groundbreaking book, *The Museum Experience* (1992), introducing their thinking model of the same name. They promote their book as the first one to examine the museum visit with a visitor’s eyes and try to find

answers about why people come to a museum, what they do while they are there and what they learn during their visit. In their later book, *Learning from Museums: Visitor Experiences and the Making of Meaning* (2000), they focus much more on learning in the museum, and I want to present their particular concept.

What can you learn in a museum context and what determines this learning? Their constructivist understanding is that learning requires pre-knowledge, proper motivation, a combination of emotional, physical and mental action and an appropriate context in which they can articulate their thoughts. They object to what they perceive as the traditional view of learning at a museum: visitors come to a museum, look at the exhibitions or participate in programmes, and if the exhibitions and programmes are good, the visitors will have learned what the curators and facilitators intended (2000:3). Falk and Dierking perceive this view as a gross oversimplification of what happens.

Their definition of a museum experience as learning is however based on the visitor's mental attitude:

Museum visitors do not catalogue visual memories of objects and labels in academic, conceptual schemes, but assimilate events and observations in mental categories of personal significance and character, determined by events in their lives before and after the museum visit (1992:123).

Falk and Dierking construct a contradistinction between academic categories and the personal commonsense understanding that ordinary visitors create. Unsurprisingly they believe that the pre-knowledge is of great importance for the visitor's specific interest, motivation and understanding, but, rather surprisingly, they believe that the learning the museum leads to is actualised until *after* the museum visit.

The long-term effect of learning is a pivotal aspect of their methodical approach. Falk and Dierking follow specific people at the museum and interview them on the spot. Importantly, they also interview the same people 3-4 months after their visit to find out what kind of knowledge collection the museum visit set in motion. Thus leading to another central aspect, namely that learning beyond the above assumptions "... requires an appropriate context within which to express itself" (2000:32). The research interviews appear to result in an appropriate context in which it is possible to formulate the knowledge in one's memory and call it forth by using questions and keywords.

The two researchers prefer to explore learning in the museum when visitors come alone or with others in a social context.² Their method is to find their informants at the museum entrance, where they do a brief interview about who they are, where they are from, why they are there

and what they expect to see and discover. Then they get permission to observe the informants without disturbing them on their way around the museum and make notes in the process. The visit concludes with an open interview about what the informants found interesting and informative. Four to five months later there is a follow-up phone interview.

Falk and Dierking's epistemological principle is embedded in their model with the three contexts, which combined play a role in the interactive learning that takes place (1992:5, further developed in 2000:12). This model contains the three contexts - personal, social and physical - constructed by the visitor's continuous interaction during the exhibits.

The *personal context* can be viewed as each visitor's own personal agenda and comprises a range of expectations and aspirations concerning what the visitor can get out of a visit. Each visitor's personal context is unique and contains an infinite number of experiences and knowledge about things in the world, but also knowledge and experiences that differ from the form and content of the museum.

The *social context* describes how a museum visit always takes place in a social context, because museums are often visited in groups, and people who visit a museum alone cannot avoid coming into contact with or relating to other visitors or the museum staff. Regardless of whether a museum is crowded or nearly empty, it influences the visitor's experience. Each visitor's perspective is dramatically influenced by who accompanies them, e.g. by whether it is an eighteen year old walking with an octogenarian, parents walking with their young children or an expert walking with a novice.

The *physical context* applies to both the architecture, the feeling of the building and the objects within it. How do people find their way to the museum? The parking, wardrobe etc.? How do visitors orient themselves spatially in a museum and how are they met by the design and form of the exhibition? Where do visitors have to go to move around the exhibitions or rest when museum fatigue sets in?

When Falk and Dierking investigate the informant's experiences at the museum, they see it as a snapshot, but one that is, "... a very long snapshot" in relation to the amount of time visitors spend in a museum (2000:10). They extend this long snapshot even more, because they want to understand learning, which requires "... a longer view". Panning the camera back in time and space is possible in order to see the learners individually over an extended period of their lives and it is also possible to see the museum in a wider social and local context (2000:11).

Falk and Dierking are particularly focused on the conditions that need to be satisfied for an interactive experience to take place. Both of their books end with concrete proposals for what museum staff can do to improve learning. Their studies are also preoccupied with showing how

their model and the thinking behind it can be used, but it is not entirely clear what their informants actually experience.

While Fyfe and Ross operate with the big telescope and look at whether their informants relate in any way to local museums, Falk and Dierking come closer to the museum. They examine what people actually learn in a particular museum. They also clearly address the difference between the immediate linguistic empowerment of the experience at the museum in relation to the linguistic empowerment evident during the telephone interview several months after the museum visit and thereby increase the camera's pan across time and space in order to get immediate learning incorporated into a larger context. The question remains as to whether they ever get inside the experience of the museum, the exhibition and the objects' stories.

Falk and Dierking make a tight coupling between learning and memory. What one remembers is what has been learned. They are somewhat unaware that their review process actually helps produce the cues that open the mind. Memory researcher Daniel Schacter writes that memory is not like the photographs in an album, "... we do not store judgment-free snapshots of our past experiences but rather hold on to the meaning, sense, and emotions these experiences provided us (1996:5).

Thus, what is remembered is activated by the cues that initiate the process and these cues may vary and with them also the memories. We may forget and remember depending on, "... the extent to which a retrieval cue reinstates or matches the original encoding. Explicit remembering always depends on the similarity of affinity between encoding and retrieval processes" (Schacter 1996:60).

The unequivocal answer

The focus on the museum's role in creating social identity and the interactive experiences that create opportunities for learning are approaches that give long, complex answers. The use of qualitative methods and some perhaps rather complex research interests offer many openings and interesting issues, but not as many unambiguous answers.

The use of questionnaires and highly structured telephone interviews can quickly provide pretty clear answer to simple problems. In this way obtaining and comparing the answers about whether the visitors are satisfied with the museum, how often they come to the museum, who reads the signs etc. is easily done. Apart from this kind of research, typical museum visitors in Denmark are notably women aged 50, who live north of Copenhagen and are well educated. Other researchers have also recorded visitors walking around at exhibitions where they stop to look at something or read, thus providing an opportunity to note what has *attraction power* and which parts of an exhibition have *holding power*.

Obtaining simple answers has great appeal, but unfortunately they

Ill. 8.1: The video-cap with a tiny camera and the backpack with a video recorder at an art gallery.



are also often tied to the small questions asked. Even though visitor studies have been done for decades, various researchers nonetheless believe that little is known about museum experience in its entirety and that the need for further research on the relationship between visitors and objects is great, particularly regarding objects in the context of museum exhibitions (Moore 1997:47, Duncan & Wallach 2004:51).

What really happens in the encounter between the exhibition, objects and visitors? If memory research is credible, every linguistic context that delivers cues like keywords from researchers also creates the answers in that framework, rather than the experience of the museum visitor. Obtaining or finding an expression for the 'pure' experience is impossible, as it will always be embedded in the visitor's previous knowledge, experiences and adventures. In order to understand more fully and concretely how the museum experience creates meanings, other methods besides interviews must be used.

Development of a phenomenological method

Many years ago I came up with the idea that it might be possible to follow museum visitors - then called informants - very closely by providing them with a tiny video camera placed in a hat. Doing so would make it possible to record the informant's movements around the exhibition, while also recording any conversations that took place along the way. Technically difficult and extremely expensive, the idea was put on the back burner until the late 1990s, when the right technology became more accessible and I was able to have my video-cap³ built [Ill. 8.1].

The technology is only a small part of the basic methodology, which was developed by doing a number of experiments with different informants in different exhibitions and led to the following ground rules:

- There are always two informants who walk around together [the social context]
- One of them wears the specially designed video-cap that records both the visitor's movements around the rooms and any conversation between the two people on videotape
- They know they are part of a research project and that everything they do will be recorded and subjected to a thorough analysis
- They are aware that they will be recorded for one hour⁴
- The informants are not asked any questions and control their own conversation.

Falk and Dierking do their observations without disturbing their informants, but my approach is more overt and visible to participants, because it is obviously not an observation of them from the outside. The two informants also create the dialogic space they wish to share with the researcher. They are interrupted and they certainly do a great deal to live up to the role of good museum visitors. Instead of selecting the casual museum visitor, I choose people in advance and agree to meet with them at the museum on a particular day.⁵ The whole situation is thus strongly influenced by some form of 'particularity'. Any museum visit can be viewed as an experience which, according to American philosopher John Dewey, is bound in time with a start and an end and the experimental museum visits I set up reinforce this (1958:36).

The informants are not interviewed. The material used for the researcher's analysis is the videotape with the recording of the visitors' walk and conversation. In this case, I did ten sequences before I found two informants who were so articulate that they could expand their experiences beyond the simple observation. Doing an in-depth analysis was only possible when I began studying the videotape in an attempt to explore the informants' construction of meaning. One aspect of the analysis involved discovering their *reading strategy*, which is the way in which they ascribe meaning to objects and text through their movements in the exhibition and in their dialogue.

Here I will briefly scrutinise three different projects, which focus on the informants' experience of the exhibitions. One is based on a historical exhibition at the Museum in Copenhagen, the second on an on-line interactive art exhibition and the third is an art exhibition at Sophienholm, outside Copenhagen.⁶

Personal cultural history at the Museum of Copenhagen

We are at the Museum of Copenhagen with the two informants, Anne and Rikke. They walk around the exhibition 'Under the wings of democracy'. From their videotape I initially construct a set of relationships that the informants create internally in this exhibition and externally in relationship to something outside the exhibition space. I find six categories of relationships: knowledge, recognition, perception, internal, external and media relationships. A simple example where Anne sees Carmen Curlers illustrates the relationship called recognition, "My mother had some like these. Do you realise how much hair I've lost trying to roll curlers into my own hair. I always got my hair all tangled together and in the end we were forced to cut it off (Gjedde & Ingemann 2008:59).

The objects cue Anne to articulate and recall experiences and stories from her own life. One crucial aspect of my approach is finding informants who are articulate about what they see and good at challenging one another. Although we know theoretically that social relations play a role, this does not mean in practice that visitors constantly talk or in a manner that actually reflects their formation of meaning.

Art on the Internet

A study of how users create meaning in three selected web artworks led to further development of the method. The key methodological point is leaving the dialogue between the informant and the informant's good friend undisturbed. The decision was made to abandon the good friend as the other informant and use one of the researchers as the interlocutor instead. This crucial change in the framework of the inquiry also resulted in changing the ground rules:

- The researcher is included as an interlocutor if desired by the informant in what we call the *process dialogue*
- The researcher performs what we call a *work dialogue* after the informant has 'seen' a piece of artwork
- When the session is over, we create a *reflection dialogue* (Gjedde & Ingemann 2008:175).⁷

The study of the informant's creation of meaning in relation to the web artworks involved recording both their body language and other interaction with the works.⁸ The overall methodology is called *Reflexivity-Lab* (Gjedde & Ingemann 2008:136-137, 147-148).

Post museum visit interviews can be seen as a reflection of the visit, which took place some months earlier. The key point is the relationship between time, space and memory. When an informant is in a completely different space, namely at home four months later and talking on the

phone about the museum experience, the shift in time and space – away from the museum and original time – is prominent. This situation, where the informant is asked to reflect on the museum experience, can certainly be characterised as a remembrance of the visit. Informants cannot redo the physical visit, but they can change their mental image of the visit.

In the *ReflexivityLab* the informant is close to the experience because she sits in a space with the work front of her, in the experience situation, and is able to reflect as she looks and uses the artwork. One can call it reflection-in-action (Donald Schön 1983). If the informant in the dialogue is in doubt or wonders about something, she can immediately go back and test her response by going back to the work and repeating the narrative. This means she has the potential to involve her body and her interaction in a new exploration process in the concrete space.

Art at Sofienholm

We are at Sofienholm Castle, where there is a special exhibition on the painter and graphic artist Ole Sparring. The following handout is given out at the exhibition:

A lifelong interest in the Danish humorist Storm P's creation of a little comic strip called *The three small men* combined with a study trip to Arles following the footsteps of van Gogh in 1998 confronted him with these two entities, which normally would not be connected. With a fabulous talent for drawing, Storm P's three small men become mediators in his pictures and use paint, make disturbances, lift a corner of the canvas and swing into the lines of the pictures. A surprising and droll clash emerged between the myth of the great artist van Gogh and the busy, active small men (Gjedde & Ingemann 2008:79).

The informant, Jakob (27), who is wearing the video-cap, and the researcher meet to do an experimental walk through the exhibition. The experimental method has been further honed. In their joint dialogue the researcher thinks from the perspective of three categories: the process dialogue, the work dialogue and the reflection dialogue. But where can we draw the line between researcher and informant in a participatory observation? Are the two roles so intertwined that the researcher sometimes becomes the informant and the informant becomes the researcher?⁹

In my role as researcher the inquiry of the visitor's experience is tied to phenomenological theory, where reality is what people assume it to be (Kristiansen & Krogstrup 1999:14). The researcher's task is to identify and understand the definitions and interpretations people make; in other words, an essential task for a phenomenological study is to understand

understanding (Kristiansen & Krogstrup 1999:16). Creating an empathetic *proximity* and maintaining a marked *distance* are both important when doing participatory observation. It can be viewed as two separate epistemological processes in which *participation* requires empathy for a strange and unfamiliar field and where *observation* implies a distancing of the observed in addition to the registration of a quantity of factual circumstances (Kristiansen & Krogstrup 1999:122).

Taking a step back here is important. A central point of using the video-cap is that the method can also be seen as an observational study that provides insight into nonverbal behaviour. The video makes it possible to determine the time and space where the informant has been, stopped or passed by. These elementary actions can be used, for example to draw a diagram of the informant's walk. Using the video-cap also produces some unexpected results, e.g. the recording of head movements when Anne is describing her reaction to the new airport in Copenhagen: "No, no, look! It's the airport. Have you seen the new one? I was there the other day. It's completely wild! [At this moment and with these words Anne shakes her head to underline the importance of her expression] It's really cool. Smashing (Gjedde & Ingemann 2008:58)". Anne shaking her head can either be a physical denial of her verbal testimony, or it can simply be a physical amplification of her unbounded enthusiasm.

When Jakob looks at Ole Sparring's large paintings, the video shows him using his body to move conspicuously from looking at the pictures exceedingly close-up to looking at them from a far distance. He also has an interesting observation when he looks through the beautiful old doors at Sofienholm Castle and realises that the doors crop the painting in a completely different way, "... so one gets an extra frame. One can have many pictures by using that doorway" (Gjedde & Ingemann 2008:82). Jakob, who works as a guide at the city museum and has recently conducted tours of the Hammershøj home on Strandgade in Copenhagen, makes an external connection to Hammershøj.

The video is a great tool for capturing nonverbal behaviour that might not always be easy to interpret otherwise, because it can be seen and re-seen, because both time and space are caught on the videotape.

The museum's knowledge and the visitor's

What kind of knowledge or framework do museums offer visitors? How should this framework be used? Art historian Donald Preziosi believes that the most common gaze is:

... that museums are repositories of unique objects whose principal value is private enlightenment, fetishization, and vicarious possession. You may not be able to own one; you most certainly can't touch them; but you can if you wish buy a copy of one on paper your

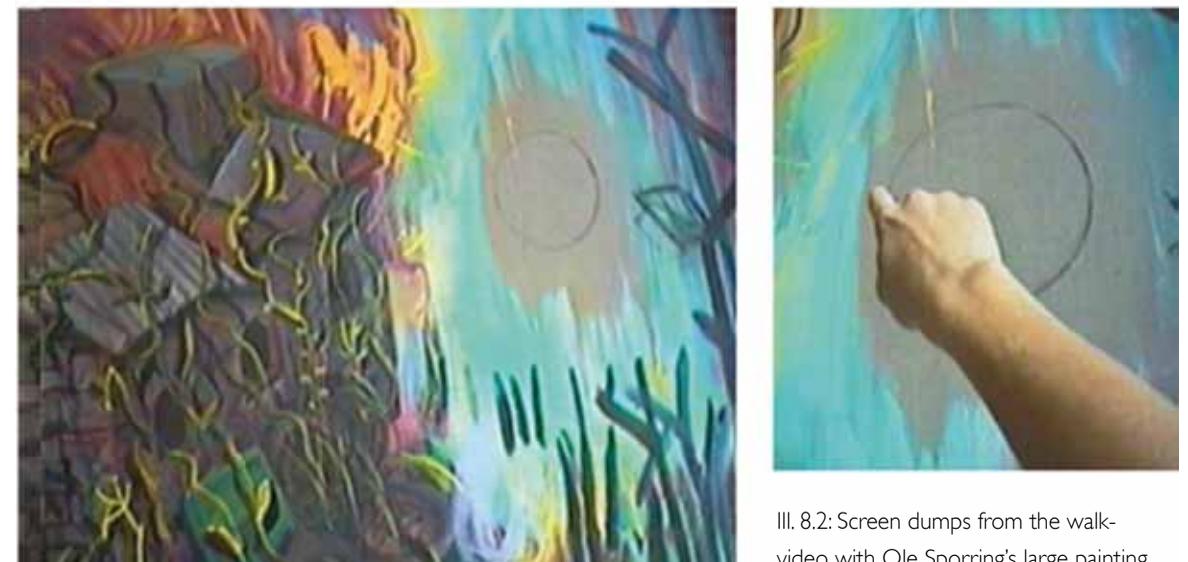
existence with what for *you* can become »a permanent part of your life (2004: 74).

The quote from handout at the Ole Sparring exhibition, indicates that there are embedded expectations that visitors are familiar with the great Danish humorist Storm P., his three little men and, of course, the fact that van Gogh lived in Arles and that they have a sense of how these particular paintings are part of the debate about art. Can all of this be counted on as common knowledge among Danes or has the bar been set too high for the 'ordinary' museum visitor? Should the museum do something to provide less informed visitors with new insight, or should these details be allowed to slip over their heads? Traditionally, art museums generally adhere to the stance implied in the latter part of this question, i.e. having the right knowledge means being included and a lack of it means feeling on the outside and remaining excluded. This inclusion/exclusion mechanism is effective in maintaining a high-taste discourse.

In the study undertaken here, Jakob, however does not read the handout until after the visit while he eats lunch on the museum's grounds. What are the experience and knowledge universes brought into play in relation to the artworks and their placement in a narrative? Jakob and the researcher come to the conclusion that being open and tolerant is essential. They do more than just experience something; they *create* an experience and will always be able to talk about the experience as, remember that time we saw Ole Sparring? (Dewey 1958:35). The experience and memories arouse an emotional reaction that differs in relation to their everyday world and gives them cause for reflection (Dewey 1958:15).

The experience the researcher and the informant create contains a duality. On the one hand, the artworks are part of marking what is different, but also mark, on the other hand, a reverse movement of everyday experiences that sheds new light on the artworks. Jakob picks out one of the three small men who, upon turning on a lamp, surprisingly discovers that it sheds darkness and not light. In this instance, Jakob draws on an everyday experience where his two-year-old son tried to shine a flashlight on a sun-filled ceiling only to discover that it did not make a spot of light.

The subtle use of everyday logic, non-art related historical knowledge and experiences run through Jakob's experience and conversation with the researcher. These aspects of the video-walk are not just something that happen, but are a result of the researcher creating a discursive space that makes them possible and permissible. They are not constantly under a microscope to determine whether they have adequate knowledge of art history to identify all the van Gogh sub-elements that are part of Ole Sparring's works. They have created a space for themselves where they can be creative and even create an entirely new piece of art. Going



Ill. 8.2: Screen dumps from the walk-video with Ole Sparring's large painting, "The overgrown house", 1998. The video camera also records the informants' hands when they pointing and draw.

up close to a window, they read a sign that says, “House. Various materials and various plants, 2000”. Looking out the window down at the beautiful park, there is a house with a lot of growth and other materials. They think this is quite witty. Entering another room, they look out the window. Surprised to find that there is no sign, they make up their own, “Grass, 2000”. They have adapted the exhibition to an extent that they create their own narratives.

They also create a story about HIM, the painter. They think he is a highly skilled/competent drawer and designer. They are preoccupied by his equilibristic treatment of crude and coarse against fine and light, the sharp and precise against the blurred and wiped off. They see this duality as a riddle waiting to be solved, elevating it to, “... he is just so good”. There is one spot in the exhibition where they give up any attempt to enter into dialogue with him, because the number of drawings is too chaotic and difficult to categorise. Nonetheless, this spot is aesthetically spectacular and contradictory.

Following the informant and the researcher so closely and recording their walk with the video-cap makes it possible to document and analyse their route and dialogue with great accuracy. Analysis of the video indicates that their dialogue takes place within the four dimensions described by Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson in their study, *The Art of Seeing* (1990):

The perceptual dimension, where there is a focus on the artwork’s organisation and elements

The emotional dimension, where positive and negative feelings and assessments are activated

The intellectual dimension, where cultural and art history are weighted

The communicative dimension, where the focus is on the internal dialogue with the artist.

These four dimensions are the traditional features of a good art history angle, but the surprising aspects of the Ole Sparring project are everything else, i.e. everything that is not naturally associated with the traditional view of what an art experience is. Expanding this field requires using everyday experiences as a framework, or the specific, focused gaze at the design of the experience that brings everyday experiences this aesthetic dimension.

Some of the preconditions for a good informant to enter into a dialogue are that the informant can observe and remain open and obliging. Additionally, the informant needs to be good at taking the initiative and not waiting for the researcher to ask questions or challenge the informant. It also requires that the informant’s language is sufficiently detailed to capture the aesthetic expression in the works and the exhibition de-

sign and that the informant has the necessary general education to delve deeply into the possible meaning formations.

If the informant does not meet all these prerequisites, uncovering the richness of possible meaning formation is not possible, but discerning how the framework of possibilities the artwork offers meets the user’s framework of possibilities is. The encounter between the two offers a number of exciting restrictions and distortions that can cause the establishment and confusion of the meaning-making process in both a surprising and constructive way.

With video-cap I focus on the experience and believe that the overall methodology makes it possible to close to not only the individual’s concrete experience and but also to the experience itself in time and space. The video-cap preserves a large part of the physical movement and the three types of dialogue that took place at the exhibition: process dialogue, work dialogue and reflection dialogue. These three types of dialogue are closely related to the experience of the artworks in a certain space. The next layer of reflexivity lies in the analysis the researcher makes based on the videotape and how precisely the researcher’s participation in the process adds to the ability to comprehend what is not stated clearly, but that both people understand. What may seem rudimentary and almost meaningless for an outsider, can be expanded on and given more meaning by the researcher.

The three contexts

The three different epistemological perspectives surrounding the formation of social identity, learning and experience have produced three different methodologies that I hope can inspire the necessary evolution of an essential and interesting field.

Documenting and analysing the large amount of practical knowledge available about the meeting between the exhibition and the framework of possibilities of the visitor is important. As Duncan and Wallach state, “No other institution claims greater importance as a treasure house of material and spiritual wealth” (2004:51).

Notes

- 1 Informant denotes the person participating in the video-walk.
- 2 In what they call a major study, they do interviews with fifty informants (2000:14 footnote 12) at the National Museum of Natural History.
- 3 The video-cap has now been replaced with video-glasses, which show the direction of the informant’s gaze much more accurately:
http://akira.ruc.dk/~bruno/Processual/researchingexperiences_x.html
- 4 The length of the tape is one hour, but recording lasts as long as visitors can stay focused.
- 5 The choice of informants is determined by their qualifications. A draft of the

introduction to Gjedde and Ingemann's book (2008) states, "By using the qualified approach the goal is to find people who have a wide range of competences. For the website and three pieces of web art we looked for two kinds of competences: 1) insight into art, aesthetic experiences, culture, galleries and the like, and 2) experience with computers and familiarity with the use of the web. In addition to using their whole body, we wanted them to have a qualified, differentiated and rich language to express their experience regarding the web art, their inner feelings and their complex memory of knowledge from their personal world and from the culture around them. Using this qualified approach meant that selecting informants was not especially easy. Coming up with candidates, talking to them and believing that the perfect combination of competences had been found can be prove to have been a fruitless endeavour in the hands-on part of the research process. There are good informants and there are the not-so-good informants. What makes a good informant depends on more than just the aforementioned competences. They must also be willing to be open-minded and explorative in the search for meaning in the chaotic situation and material. As a result doing trials with different informants is necessary and material created by not-so-good informants is discarded."

6 The Museum of Copenhagen and Sofienholm studies are part of THE MUSEUM_INSIDE project.

7 In the three forms of dialogue, we attempt to answer three simple questions: 1) How can you create a story based on your interactions and experiences? (narrative construction); 2) Do you see any links to other works? (intertextuality); and 3) Can you connect your experience with anything from your own life? (personalisation or intimacy).

8 They interact physically with a mouse by pointing on the screen or by moving the mouse. This interaction 'creates' the literal work by changing parts of the artwork.

9 Phenomenologist Alfred Schutz reflects on the time dimension, writing, "He and I, *we* share, while the process lasts, a common vivid present, *our* vivid present, which enables him and me to say: 'We experienced this occurrence together.' By the We-relation thus established, we both ... are living in our mutual vivid present, directed toward the thought to be realized in and by the communicating process. *We grow older together*" (Schutz 1973:219).

Chapter 9: Person-in-situation (I) – Experience and strategy

This is one of a series of projects that looks at the person-in-situation. These kinds of projects are framed with a phenomenological approach and the methodology used was presented briefly in chapter 8. The book, *Researching Experiences: Exploring Processual and Experimental Methods in Cultural Analysis*, provides a detailed presentation of the overall methodology and theory (Gjedde & Ingemann 2008).

This chapter focuses on the outcome from following two visitors into the universe of a historical museum in Copenhagen, where there was an exhibition dealing with democracy. The starting point of my epistemological interest is not the intentions of the museum or the curator with respect to how they imagine visitors who use the exhibition in the museum to be. Instead, the aim of my analysis is to investigate and argue for the plurality of meaning in the authentic artefacts and the elements that support the story of the objects and the overall narrative.

During the project *relations* emerged early in the process as the main keyword, e.g. the relation between objects and reality; object and object; object and text; and the most important relation: between object and visitor. In this search for the potential meaning, the exhibition has the necessary opportunities and diversity, which are the most important aspects of an exhibition from the visitor's point of view. There is of course a huge difference between the potential meaning and the meaning that is realised. The well-known reception theorist Stanley Fish claims categorically, "The text does not exist" (1980).

The text can momentarily be seen as the conglomeration of elements I mentioned earlier. Fish believes that there is no text until the reader or the visitor actualises the physical conglomeration of elements. The visitor creates the text and only the part of the text that is actualised becomes the text for the reader. According to Fish the individual reader

creates the text. Anthropologist Edwina Taborsky shares this view, but she differs on one important point, namely that the text is created by a social practice, because it is through direct speech between visitors on the physical conglomeration of elements that the text is actualised and then becomes visible and conscious (1990).

‘Under the wings of democracy’ and Anne

Anne (25) walks around in the exhibition with her friend Rikke (25) for an hour. The immediate impression their walk-video gives is that the two women talk a great deal and seem to be very engaged and interested visitors. They find objects, photographs and information to show each other that are related to their own lifeworlds. Afterwards, the outline I make of their walk shows that they spend twice the amount of time looking at the timeline on the walls as they spend looking at the islands with many objects. They spend one and a half as much time on the island with 1960-1970s objects as they do on the objects from 1920-1930 (Gjedde & Ingemann 2008).

The time they spend on the individual parts of the exhibition shows that they look at more photographs and pictures, namely 55, than they do at objects, namely 30. The authentic photographs could be defined as things and objects taken from one context and put into another in the museum due to the musealisation process. Instead of employing the photographs in this way, Anne uses them more as communication, and in this context with the texts, the use of the pictures transforms them from objects into narratives in pictures and text as a kind of history book on the walls. The hidden history of the pictures is more easily revealed, helped by the text. There is also a text close to the objects but it seems immediately more difficult to unpack. What are the objects going to tell?

First I will show how the fragmented visual and verbal utterances can be categorised and afterwards how they can be used to indicate something about the reading strategies Anna uses to create meaning in chaos.

Anne – and the four reading strategies

Anne’s walk through the exhibition oscillates between the four reading strategies. She uses *THE LOCKED GAZE* and recognises something new to her, i.e. that the first Christmas tree in Denmark was set up in Town Hall Square in 1912. She also recognises other items: the album covers from Tommy Steel, the Beatles and Savage Rose, as well as the first time the famous Little Mermaid statue had its head cut off. There is also an enormous number of artefacts that do not attract her attention in any other way than her recognising them, the level of interest too low to initiate a barrage of psychological reactions. The way she looks at them indicates that they verge on being boring, but on the other hand she does not really see them.

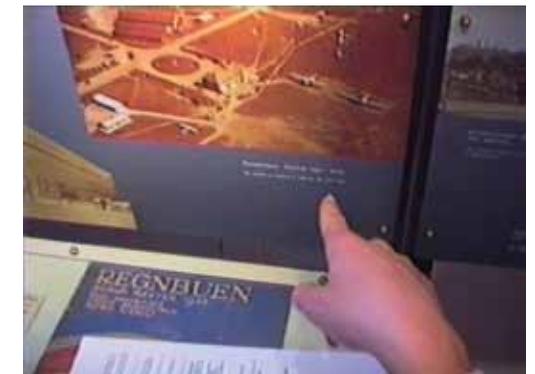
She uses *THE OPENING GAZE* and gets surprised. She looks at something familiar and ugly: a shopping cart loaded with unappetising food. She looks at something she finds aesthetically beautiful: an excellent photograph of boats in a canal in the winter or one of lights reflected in a lake. She looks at architecture: ugly high-rise buildings that grow uglier and uglier and contrasts them to the B&W building, which remains as beautiful as the day it was built. She is surprised how she remembers through her senses, e.g. feeling the weight in her hand of a heavy telephone receiver her grandma and grandpa still have. She also connects an old picture of the Copenhagen Airport with her new, personal experiences of seeing the renovated one. She lets her self be surprised and provoked by the emotions and experiences the artefacts recall and how the experiences come to mean something to her.

She uses *THE PRAGMATIC GAZE* and finds that which touches upon her daily life. She connects the photograph of Nyhavn with her aunt’s view of Nyhavn as a street where hookers hang out. She sees Carmen Curlers and remembers clearly how she got her hair so tangled up as a child that it had to be cut off. Anne constantly tries to find connections between the artefacts and herself. When she comes to 1973 on the timeline, she clearly exclaims, “... this is when I was born!” She finds her way back to earlier models of her life which hit her like a nostalgic flashback. She uses *THE REFLECTING GAZE* and mirrors her own life in others’ lives. She becomes tremendously engaged in the “How-do-I-feel-today” barometer and the life and culture it stems from. She clearly marks a distance to that life in relation to her own values and standards.

Anne switches between reading strategies when she moves through the exhibition, choosing in relation to some artefacts *THE OPENING GAZE*, while employing *THE PRAGMATIC GAZE* in relation to others. But this is only partly true, because she also switches between different reading strategies in front of a single artefact. The episode with the Carmen Curlers is a good example. Surprised by seeing something familiar in the exhibition, she chooses *THE OPENING GAZE*, but she does not remain in the recognition stage by saying to herself: here are curlers and they became modern in the 1970s. Looking at them more deeply she moves to *THE PRAGMATIC GAZE*, linking the curlers to strong personal experiences from her childhood. But she also uses *THE REFLECTING GAZE* and takes exception to using those kinds of curlers today. They are part of the past, part of a different culture, another generation and another life than the one she lives today. Lucky her, she feels. This example shows that her reading strategies are certainly dynamic and fluctuating.

Anne’s exhibition and the narrative

What kind of narrative does Anne create in the exhibition? She creates or does not recreate the narrative of the exhibition about the mu-



Ill. 9.1: Starting clockwise from the left are screen dumps from Anne's walk-video: famous inventor Jacob Ellehammer's motorcycle, a placard with his aeroplane, the new airport in Copenhagen 1925 and a peek at the exhibition room.

nicipality, the labour market, the home and consumption. She naturally has understood the fundamental structure of the exhibition because she is a thorough reader. To a great extent she uses *THE LOCKED GAZE* and tries to understand what she is intended to understand. But she also meets the exhibition with her previous knowledge and values. She creates the text in collaboration with her friend, Rikke, and what she sees is quite another exhibition than the intended one.

The analysis of the six relational categories and the four gazes draws a picture of a visitor exceedingly concerned about two issues: aesthetics and quality in her relation to the artefacts. For Anne, relating personally to the artefacts is vital. She is occupied with time and with relating the artefacts to time, which is why the timeline on the wall is critical for her. She gets surprising knowledge about pictures and objects from the timeline, which obviously engages her more than in the original objects. The objects are not unimportant because they fit into her fundamental expectations that a museum must have objects. They represent an available opportunity and are not something she actually uses in her construction of her visit to the exhibition.

Anne is open and willing to be surprised. Even if the artefacts are not remarkable she is good at finding surprising ways to connect herself to them. Willing to find another reading strategy if the previous one is unsuitable, Anne easily moves between each of the four reading strategies, but this does not mean that everything is possible. She excludes large quantities of experiences and knowledge because in addition to being open she is simultaneously closed. When choosing *THE OPENING GAZE* and *THE PRAGMATIC GAZE* she searches for something that can surprise her, that she can relate to personally and that reflects her values that focus on the aesthetic, the quality and the story. The framework provided by the timeline on the wall contributes greatly to her experience because it becomes a part of the way she structures her own narrative. The aforementioned values however cause her to exclude a rich array of possible stories that could be constructed based on the exhibition. For her the aesthetic quality is closely connected to craftsmanship and her senses. She uses her senses to relate to many of the artefacts she has a personal relationship to, for example Carmen Curlers, telephone receivers, toys etc.

An extremely well-functioning informant, Anne to a great extent is able to verbally articulate what she experiences during her walk around the exhibition. She and Rikke are also involved in a close dialogue in which Rikke alternates between being accepting and challenging what Anne says.

An interesting issue is the relationship between the real-time experience and the period of reflection. There is the moment where attention is paid to an object that provides the feeling of creating an experience and then there must be a time gap to allow for reflecting upon what hap-

pened. From my experience this moment can be as brief as a few seconds. The crucial aspect is not time but the situation in which dialogue is constructed around the experience. When the two friends walk through the exhibition they are mainly present in the experience and not the reflection stage, which puts them in the position of talking-in rather than talking-about the experience (see also Leinhardt & Knutson 2004).

Chapter 10: Person-in-situation (2) – Experience and questioning

This is the second of a series of projects that look at the person-in-situation. In the first project the focus was on a historical exhibition and getting close to the strategies two visitors, Anne and Rikke, used to create meaning out of the design of the exhibition in question.

The second project is about an art exhibition on famous Danish painter Ole Sparring at Sofienholm, an art gallery in the suburbs of Copenhagen. The two visitors, Jakob and Gunnar, try to find some relation and meaning in the exhibition as a coherent design and in the dissemination of this one-man exhibition.

The art of seeing

In their inspiring book, *The Art of Seeing: An Interpretation of the Aesthetic Encounter*, authors Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson try to encompass which factors are meaningful when visitor and artwork meet. Their research is a methodological mix of qualitative individual interviews and quantitative enquiry. The informants in their study were not ordinary visitors, but rather 57 curators from 17 very different institutions. In their research, the informants talk about certain works of art they have selected that mean a great deal to them personally. In the research interviews the informants use their own examples as a prototype for the themes they talk about.

In my project, I narrow the focus even further by choosing two ordinary visitors without any specialised art or art history degrees or training. I selected a specific exhibition to function as the pivotal point of their experiences. Instead of interviewing the informants, my analysis is based on a walk-video and the conversation the informants engage in while looking at the exhibition. While Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson focus

specifically on the artwork, my theoretical starting point is the visitor. I examine the person-in-situation and the construction of meaning in their experience from a phenomenological standpoint [Ill. 10.1].

Relations and experiences

My analysis focuses on the relations the two visitors create and shows that they create at least four of them. First, by focusing on the details, they create *internal relations* between items in an individual work of art, which in turn helps them to interpret a specific painting. In addition they also create internal relations between different paintings, e.g. between the sunflowers in the hands of the artist and the sunflowers in one picture related to yet another version of sunflowers. There is also the example of a turned over can of red paint that is similar to another can with red paint in a different painting.

Next, via their observations and conversation they create many *external relations* to something they associate with outside the works of art. When Gunnar creates a connection between the painted Saurians and snakes to Nordic mythology and the snake pit, he is simultaneously revealing a frightening and unpleasant experience. Another example is when Jakob connects the picture with the lamp that shines darkness instead of light to an everyday experience he has had with his son about light. The image of a bitten ear creates two relations; one to Van Gogh's missing ear and the other to Mike Tyson biting someone's ear in the boxing ring.

Third, on a simple level, *recognition relations* are created because they recognise references to especially well-known Van Gogh paintings, turning the experience into a kind of test of their knowledge of art. They also recognise many of the elements based on common knowledge and experience of the world around them: cell phones, elephants, ducks, swords, bicycles, sheep, ears, cans, flowers etc.

Finally they also see *aesthetic relations* when they move out of the stories and out of the multitude of references in the paintings. They have an aesthetic gaze when they look at the composition, the formal elements like colour and the varied structures, which can be fine vs. rough, blurred vs. clear or smooth vs. textured. They wonder about the skills of the artist.

The four relations can be seen as an analytical tool to clarify how the experience is created in relation to the specific works of art, but the experience of the visitor is much more than just the reaction to the actual paintings and an attempt to understand them, as marvellous as they can be. The experience is looked at using the person-in-action and the performance is the relation between the two visitors, but also the other visitors in the room. The visitors' use of movement and movement within



Ill. 10.1: Paint yourself, NOPI, 1999. The three small men think the old pictures need some pepping up. Will they be discovered before making mischief?" Screen dumps from the walk-video.

the exhibition room, and thus many contexts, influence their experience and are incorporated in the phrase person-in-action.

The *Attention Model* creates a more precise understanding of the many elements that influence the experience of visitors. In the model, we made the common sense idea of experience more operational by dividing the experience into the following four fields: action, emotions, values and knowledge (Gjedde & Ingemann 2008).

The *action field* has to do with the everyday activities involved in being a visitor who makes informed choices about specific activities. At the exhibition, we use not only our eyes, but also our whole body to interact with the exhibition. We move our entire body from one room to the next. We move from one picture to another. We move back and forth at a variety of distances in relation to the artwork. We can move in time and space and see the whole exhibition in a few minutes or we can become more familiar with the exhibition by moving slowly through it.

Jakob and Gunnar are slow and thorough, using their bodies extensively to vary their distances to the artwork. They point and explain using their arms and bodies. They turn their bodies towards one another and talk, enhancing their expressions. They often look at each other and their body language to receive confirmation or to indicate a contradiction.

The *emotional field* is the emotional connection between objects and people and between people. First of all, the informants are looking forward to being together and experiencing the exhibition. They are curious and open-minded and pleasantly anticipate what is going to happen. From the beginning they feel well-accepted by *him*, the artist, and they confidently allow themselves to be drawn in by his universe, eagerly involving themselves in a dialogue with him. They encounter the tremendous amount of expression in the artworks, but also the humour and the creative turn-arounds. They are on an adventure and go exploring. They become irritated when the challenge becomes too overwhelming and they are unable to create any reasonable meaning, e.g. when they encounter the room with innumerable sketches.

The *value field* is related to collective and personal norms, morals and value systems. If one has a rather respectful attitude toward art, and especially to the renowned artist Van Gogh, the obviously disrespectful reuse of his great works of art can be a provocation. If one believes art must be aesthetically beautiful, the obvious brutality and grotesqueness of the paintings contradicts the idea of mainstream painting and means they will perhaps be rejected and avoided. In addition, the nearly obscene use of e.g. religious symbols such as Christ on the cross can be highly provoking in this new contextualisation.

My two visitors seem to be quite accepting of the artist's universe and are not provoked due to their values or their personal and collective values. Nevertheless, they discuss the aspect of different types of reac-



Ill. 10.2: "Searching the tomb of King Gorm, 1995". Screen dumps from the walk-video.

tions in relation to other people's values regarding what might provoke, hurt or make them angry, perhaps causing them to reject the painting's content and aesthetic form.

The *knowledge field* includes obtaining new knowledge and encountering e.g. a new work of art that can actualise familiar knowledge. New knowledge was obviously gained by reading the signs associated with the individual works of art. The usual information of title and production year were included, but also a rather long, substantial text that pushed the interpretation in a certain direction.

One problematic question involves whether new knowledge is nevertheless gained through the artworks themselves. While looking at *Searching the tomb of King Gorm* they receive new knowledge from the painting due to its aesthetic composition and formal elements, including the colour, texture and line. Moreover they gain some knowledge about how the artist relates to his profession as a painter. They also learn that this painter uses certain aesthetic means to produce the image of a tomb that is not gloomy, but rather indelicate and humorous. He shows how it looks when the painter is searching for the tomb of King Gorm [Ill. 10.2].

At the same time, the painting actualises the ancient story of the snake pit and the text on the sign with the title obviously functions as an important clue to retracing the long-forgotten thousand-year history of the old king.

Even in recognising what is well-known, some new knowledge is created about Van Gogh. They have seen the famous paintings in so many forms that they have nearly disappeared in their minds. It is through Ole Sparring's recreations that the motives are renewed. Through displacement and a new contextualisation it is possible to see them with new eyes, thereby making them interesting and surprising.

They also gain new knowledge about the painter. The whole exhibition hall is filled with his paintings and objects, which provide a glimpse into his everyday life and demonstrate that he uses the television, newspapers, cell phones, toys, nature, homes, symbols, pictures of every kind etc. Each item is used and transformed by him into his funny but also cruel universe. The visitors got the feeling that they wanted to meet him. Or they felt almost as though they had already talked with him through his paintings. They have been to a splendid party with lively dialogue and left with a good feeling about the person they were talking to. The person behind the works of art may even be more than what the artist placed into the art history.

The personal and the universally human

In their research, Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson found that there are four important dimensions in the visitors' experience of art: the per-

ceptual, emotional, intellectual and communicative. They conclude that art promoters cannot make a universal functional plane to catch the attention of people with such different and unknown experiences (1990:189).

This conclusion is understandable because they are interested in finding the factors that lead to and expand an aesthetic encounter and that determine the aesthetic encounter as a flow of activity. At the same time, however, by isolating their focus and letting their informants talk about only one piece of art taken out of context, I believe that they do not reach their aim of understanding what occurs in a real exhibition.

There is more. In my research the whole narrative field is involved and defined as the building, the exhibition rooms, the works of art, the installation, the signs, and the visitors, both mind and body. This becomes clear through the recordings from the walk-video, which registers my visitors' bodily movements and their conversations.¹

Their personal experiences can be seen as universally human within the framework of the pragmatic philosopher John Dewey and the phenomenologist Alfred Schutz. My visitors see the experiences of everyday life as superior to what Schutz sees as the other "regime of meaning", such as dreams, plays, religion, science, insanity and art, which are modifications of the archetype of everyday life (Schutz 1961:230).

From this point of view, the analysis of the different relations and then of the four experience fields reveals that it is the richness of the works of artwork in their context combined with the richness of the visitors that extends their experience far beyond their pre-understanding of the exhibition, which is demonstrated in the above analysis of the walk-video.

In this chapter, I have shown that the richness of looking is more than the aesthetic encounter in isolation. The broader perspective shows that the influence is not only the constructed artworks, their installation, their stories, and their titles, but also the visitors in their effort to see and especially converse and listen to one another, all of which is crucial to understanding and learning in an exhibition. The combined actions of mind and body should be taken into consideration in the construction of horizon broadening exhibitions and dissemination must be made a bigger part of the overall design.²

Notes

- 1 My research has many connections to the understanding of the museum experience model proposed by Falk and Dierking (1992) and focuses on the physical, personal and social context as influential to the experience as a whole.
- 2 In an extensive project on the influence of conversation between visitors on learning in museums, Leinhardt and Knutson (2004) have identified different kinds of explanatory engagement, which are grouped together and organised in terms of 'making lists' (e.g. naming objects); 'personal synthesis' (connec-

tions made between what is observed and one's own individual world); 'analysis' (comments of an analytical/descriptive nature); 'synthesis' (the connection between objects and different phenomena); and, lastly, 'explanations' (answers to questions on mechanisms, processes etc.).

The most interesting result is that the visitors wanted to be challenged by controversial questions and differing points of view. This stimulates discussion even further and allows visitors to explore what they think.

Chapter 11: Person-in-situation (3) – Experience and interaction

This is the third of a series of projects that look at the person-in-situation. In the first two projects a pair of visitors was followed to record and evaluate their reading strategies, construction of relations and construction of meaning at a historical exhibition and an art exhibition.

The third project takes a step upwards and comprises fourteen informants, or seven pairs, in an effort to scrutinise the experience and construction of meaning in complex artworks using an experimental set-up in a multimedia exhibit called *Vala's Runecast*. The experiment focuses on the following museological questions: How can the visitor create meaning for complex artworks? What influence does the notion of the public have on the users' construction of meaning?

Sign and context

An object, for example a stone axe or a painting, is given different meanings depending on whether it is placed in a cultural history museum or at an art museum (Annis 1994). The common conception is that where and how the object is contextualised creates the meaning, but on a very simple level the object has inherent qualities. We can all picture a typical showcase with a stone axe rather laconically labelled, "Stone axe from around 5,000 b.c. found on field near Slagelse". Or picture a painting hanging in a gold frame on the wall with the tersely labelled, "Marc Chagall: The river of time, 1930-1939". No one would doubt that the stone axe belongs in a cultural history museum and no one would doubt that the painting belongs in an art museum.

The objects have a built-in essence, a sort of schemata, stemming from our common sense knowledge about art and culture and our knowledge about museums and their exhibitions. The two objects are automatically assigned either a cultural history context or an art history

context without the presence of the other significant indications we normally get when we physically enter a museum.¹

In our experiment we present a specially selected group of people with a large interactive flat screen in a dark lab where they see, hear and use a multimedia exhibit called *Vala's Runecast*. In contrast to the stone axe and the painting, the exhibit does not have a specific essence. As a new media with an expression and a user interface that are not immediately recognisable as a certain genre, it is a representation that cannot be placed into a certain context based on what it is about. Cultural sociologist Celia Lury calls this form of the mental creation of context 'out-contextualisation' – a process where the context is doubled and connected by obvious choices (1998:3). In the following, we scrutinise what goes on in the digital media, but, first, we discuss how the construction of the space takes place in digital media.

The body in the room

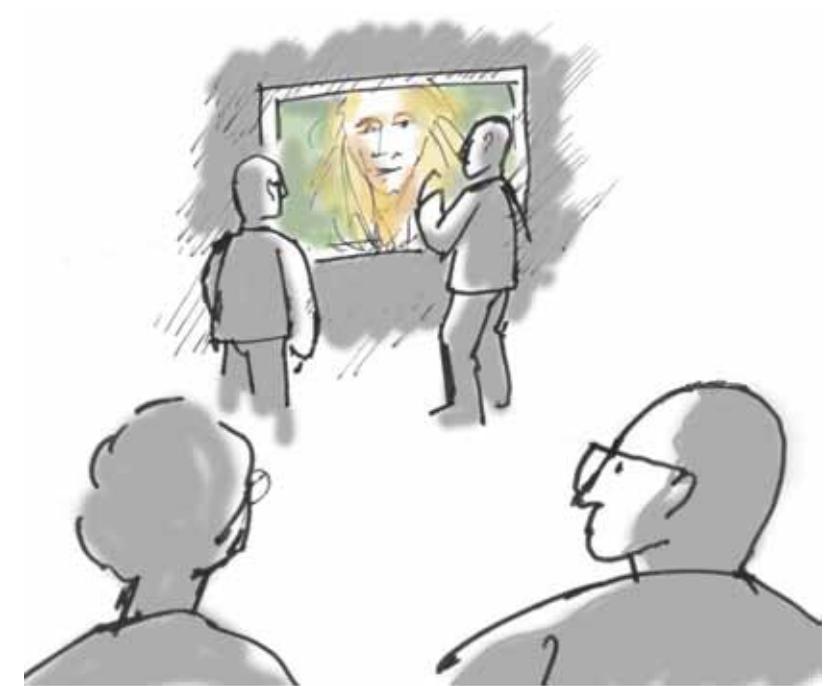
When designing the VALA_PROJECT, we included the physical room, the physical size of the picture, the experience of being in public and bodily movement. The common room was extended and turned into a dialogical room allowing mutual interactivity between each informant and the interactive work and between the two informants in a pair in their effort to work together. As a result, we chose an interactive multimedia work entitled *Vala's Runecast* by British artist Maureen Thomas which is about the prophecies of a vala. Our use of this multimedia work requires the informants to interact with the screen, which meant using a larger than normal screen measuring 48 x 76 cm,² thus creating the need to stand further away than ordinary reading distance to obtain a more panoramic overview. Users must be at least an arm's length from the panorama screen however to initiate and control the interactive programme and to point at the screen and the picture.

In order to integrate the public into the design of the research, we chose two players or informants who had to interact with the work along the way and who had to agree on what they were going to do and who was to comment on their experiences along the way. The two informants stood in a huge, nearly pitch-black room in front of a picture large enough to be visible from a distance of several meters.

The focus of the VALA_PROJECT is not the artwork in itself, but the users as players and the informants' choices and behaviour. They cause the changes that happen and immediately have a double consciousness in which they are aware of their relation to the person they are standing beside and in which they also know they potentially can be looked at.

In addition to the two informants, two researchers, and one technician are also in the room [Ill. 11.1]. The technician is important because we have a rather complex setup in which user experiences and inquir-

Ill. 11.1: The two researchers (foreground) in dialogue with the two informants by the flat screen showing *Vala's Runecast*.



ies are recorded in sequence on video using different video cameras and positions. Although the artificialness of the situation influences the informants participating in our experimental research project, we expect to discover central aspects regarding the creation of meaning using this research design. The cognitive process is invisible but leaves traces in the form of physical expressions and verbal statements. Video recordings of the informants' interaction with the work, each other and the researchers provide a solid foundation for a phenomenological analysis and interpretation.

The social in the individual

It is an easy post-modern position that subjective interpretation and construction are first of all subjective. Nevertheless, we are bound together by something more common. The philosopher John Macmurray believes that, in principle, human experience is a common experience. Even in its most individual elements, human life is common lives and human behaviour always bears in its natural structure a reference to the personal *other*. In brief, one can say that the object of personal existence is not the individual but two people in relation to one another and that we are not people founded on an individual right, but people because we relate to others. That which is personal is established through personal relations with others. The object of that which is personal is not the 'I' but rather 'You and I'.³



This does not prevent us from perceiving ourselves as unique individuals. What makes us common with a collective memory is, as Michael Schudson writes, that:

... memory is in fact social. People remember collectively, publicly, interactively. This is true even of individual memory that is sustained only by social interaction, by rehearsal, review, and the language people have by virtue of being social beings. (1995:360).

In the VALA_PROJECT, in a very specific and detailed manner, we follow the creation of relations between all the actors that two by two enter the dark and mysterious cave of the laboratory and in many different ways interact with the screen, *Vala's Runecast*, and each other in a complex game. Not everything, however, can be remembered and not everything becomes shared socially. There are limits to what is possible and what is realised. Where are the limits?

In the above quotations by Schudson and MacMurry, having an experience and then having a memory about something drift easily and elegantly together. What separates the experience and the memory is time. We can have an experience characterised by a certain length of time with the feeling that it has a beginning and an ending. In this aspect, the experience is similar to a narrative. In some aspects, it is this 'now' we are trying to capture by means of our observations and our video cameras. A snapshot can be seen as static and stable, but it would be better seen as dynamic and under continuous change.

It is this change that happens in the ongoing dialogue and reflections in the interview and dialogue with the informants. In this process, the 'now' is transformed into a now-and-then, and here the memories of

Ill. 11.2: Some impressions from the Vala Runecast – showing nature and cultural symbols like horses, golden keys, opening doors and birds. Screenshot from the video recordings.

a specific experience emerge from what-has-been. But, it is more complicated than this because the memory is broader. When we experience something, it becomes embedded in our memories. The memory of collective symbols, archetypes, social experiences and experiences of nature are incorporated in us and we draw on them in our understanding and interpretation of the present.

As users, viewers and visitors, however, we are also lazy. A stone axe in a museum showcase labelled with a simple, laconic text is brought into a nearly impossible situation. As Michael Baxendall points out, it is obviously a rather complicated issue when a visitor looks at an object from another culture regardless of the geographic and chronological distance. He stresses the following as the three circumstances that create this complex situation:

First, there are the ideas, values, and purposes of the culture from which the object comes. Second, there are the ideas, values, and, certainly, purposes of the arrangers of the exhibition.... Third, there is the viewer himself, with all his own cultural baggage of unsystematic ideas, values and, yet again, highly specific purposes (1991:34).

Very often, the visitor lacks a storyteller or at least has difficulties finding who is telling the story. A stone axe does not tell its story but a Chagall painting, on the other hand, perhaps is a little better in aiding our attempts as very clever and well-informed visitors to tell the right story ourselves. How can we as visitors overcome all these barriers? Most often, we cannot, thereby leaving potential experiences and meaning undiscovered.

We can also alter the perspective and look at how our experiences

with the VALA_PROJECT can be discussed in relation to these issues that perhaps should be developed in the museum.

The narratives of the user

As Michael Schudson writes: "... memory is in fact social. People remember collectively, publicly, interactively..." – but is that truth? On a very general level, our memories become social because we use them by telling about them. Nevertheless, even if something is social, it does not mean that it is uniform. We can believe that 'memory is social' and draw upon the imagined community that we are part of, but each of us tests our memories in the public sphere by describing our personal experiences and our knowledge when we remember in public. Our memories come into existence during this process, where they can be challenged and commented on by others, thereby transforming the individual experiences again.

We claim that *Vala's Runecast* is about Nordic mythology, but also that it is interactive and challenging in its visuality. The visual aspects are so challenging that a couple of young female informants who reject the mysterious woman talking in the artwork make the following comment: "... really, there's an extreme amount of talk ... you're filled with this multitude of talk ... you lose focus because there's so much talk."

Their irritation is so intense that they totally refuse to listen to the voice during the process and focus on the repetitive music instead. They quickly agree that the music is rather melancholy and too Celtic and that this sort of music is also irritating, "... because I can't relate it to myself." It is, on the other hand, precisely this music that they combine with the visual ornamentation and symbols into a coherent interpretation when one of them says, "... automatically on something with the sixties. Actually something about my mother. It's not my life in any way. No, they're not talking about my life".

They create narratives that ignore the talking, the Nordic mythology, the music and the unfamiliar strange symbols, but they continue to watch the pictures of the landscape, nature and the existential aspect of the pictures. They reach to focus on themes about the creation of life, destiny and thoughts about one's roots, stating, "... perhaps both human beings and my own roots, but perhaps the roots of all men".

They intermesh their experiences using many different strands around a core of what-is-mine and what-is-not. It is this-is-mine that becomes included in their narrative, which becomes a clear narrative even though they are unable to tell about it briefly. The narrative becomes evident in an analysis of their words and actions in the process of interaction with the artwork. If they do not, however, at any time realise that Nordic mythology is the turning point of this artwork, have they not then to-

tally misunderstood it altogether? Or are the following two informants, a young man and a young woman, more astute?

The young woman knows a great deal about Nordic mythology beforehand because her father read aloud for her as a child and talked with her about Odin, Thos and the whole Nordic pantheon of gods. The young man, on the other hand, is uninterested. He looks at some rather violent images of darkness, fire, horses, weapons and makes the comment that, "... it's somewhat cruel isn't it ... with all the fire in the back. It's terrible". When we ask him what it is all about, it is very difficult for him to answer. This is not, in contrast, a problem for the woman, who says, "It's something about war". Immediately, she connects this thought with the knowledge that she already has about Nordic mythology. She sees the horse as an expression of power but also as representing something divine. She thinks about one horse in particular named Sleipner, which has eight legs and is Odin's horse. The horse has magical powers and, "... can both run on the water and in the air". She knows that the horse is a child of the god Loki. Later on, she looks at an image that reminds her of rock carvings. The young man says that he does not know what it is and the woman grins rather outraged because it is common knowledge – to her. Does he really not know that!

They know each other quite well, which becomes obvious in the process of their interaction. The male informant says that his female partner is thinking rather historically and the woman comments that he is much more focused on the pictorial expression. They listen intensively to the voice in the film and one of them says, "I feel it's kind of like a task that I have to solve and I think that the pictures help create this mood ... the pictures become, to some extent, the background".

The young man mentally switches off the sound because he thinks that he does not know very much and because he thinks that the vala, "... can be rather irritating", is insisting and wants to be listened to, "So she almost manipulates us and coerces us into what to think about the picture. I would rather create my own impression". He looks at the pictures and sees a picture of a ring, which he associates with encircling, "... and it becomes day and then it becomes night and the ring is a symbol because it rolls ... you can't go on and on in the same ring." Then, suddenly, he makes a striking statement, "Even if it becomes night again, it will never be the same night!" He is also the one who creates a number of inter-visual relations. He thinks that some of the pictures are similar to Monet's style because he sees numerous reflections and layers of pictures. In different places they become Magritte-like because the pictures glide in a surreal way into contradictory elements. The young man is aware of the pictures in layers, which he believes occurs, "... because a great deal of life is being created in those layers ... in relation to speed, colour and shadows".

The two informants find themselves in two different mental spaces. The one is very structural, while the other is very open and associative. This contradiction is not destructive but functions, on the other hand, rewardingly as it appears in the study where the male informant listens to the woman and says, "... oh, that's what it meant".

Things with explicit layers of meaning

What can the poetic and open narrative in this hyper-film do that a historical artefact cannot? The main point is that the poetic and mysterious can open up for the narratives of the user. The poetic and open narrative structure in the artwork can be called a seeking narrative because the artwork contains, "... different threads one tries to gather" and because these threads are partly inserted into the work, while others are added by the informants. Threads added by the informants can be seen as being related to the personal questions each user meets the work with and which partly are explicitly enveloped by the experience and knowledge of the life we have lived.

Through this project, we have tried to uncover what *seeking narratives* really consist of. We have shown that the most obvious, well-known and easily available layer is the cultural symbols that informants are more or less familiar with. The next layer is the archetypical symbols such as light/dark, life/death etc. The third layer is feelings of uneasiness, joy and happiness derived from sound, intonation and visual expressions, especially regarding colour and contrast. The fourth layer is more airy than moods as we become enveloped in unmediated experiences of nature and experiences from childhood.

Seeking narratives can have an infinite number of specific physical expressions that create the framework of possibilities of the work and open the framework of possibilities of the user to gather as many threads as possible to create a coherent narrative. This narrative is an intense extension of what the artefacts from the material culture communicate or what the artefacts from the material culture have been used to communicate.

The VALA_PROJECT also shows that user interactivity and performance in the public sphere have a decisive influence on the creation of relevant stories. The narratives are relevant for the user and not just for professionals. In a text-based culture, one has to realise that visual culture plays a big role and that complex visuality, as we have seen in this project, is one of the ways to examine the layers of seeking narratives, which obviously is highly important.

Notes

- 1 Falk and Dierking call these features the physical context in their 1992 book, *The Experience Model*.

- 2 The flat screen is 48 x 67 cm, approximately the size of Cezanne's painting.
- 3 MacMurray (1962:61) in Uzgiris (1996:22).

Chapter 12: What is the question? Creating a learning environment in the exhibition

The first version of this chapter was written in close collaboration with post-doc Nana Quistgaard, PhD.

Is it possible to create curiosity and reflection at a science centre by stimulating and facilitating dialogue between 15–16-year-old students? The background for this question is the vast amount of studies showing that unstructured school trips result in little (if any) student reflection.

We used a dialogic approach to prompt student curiosity and reflection. Four students were chosen to participate in the study. One of the authors took on the role of facilitator and joined each of the four students on a visit to seven exhibits (pre-selected by the authors) and recorded the student interactions on video. During each visit, the facilitator made sure that the students understood how to use the exhibits so that technical/practical problems were not an issue. The researcher also conducted a brief interview adjacent to each exhibit to allow students to reflect upon their experiences. We also interviewed the four students one year later to find out how the dialogic approach had impacted them over a longer term.

The right question

A science centre is an experience centre, where visitors can experiment with models of scientific and technological phenomena and can be seen as an open offer to the visitor. But something that is open and maybe even very interactive and social perhaps does not succeed as dissemination or learning, because it is just so - open. What can be experienced at the exhibition may become somewhat isolated and an experience visitors find difficult to learn from and understand as something more than just what is on the immediate surface. It can be exciting or boring! It is like getting an answer to something where you do not know what the question is or where you certainly would not have asked one or were even curious about the topic. The British philosopher Alain de Botton stresses in

his curious book, *The Art of Travel*, how important it is to have the right questions to ask the world, “Unfortunately for the traveller, most objects don’t come affixed with the question that will generate the excitement they deserve. There is usually nothing fixed to them at all, or if there is it tends to be the wrong thing” (Botton 2003:132).

One can easily believe that the setup at a science centre speaks for itself and is directly accessible - but is this the case? Our starting point is setups in the Experimentarium in Copenhagen, the Danish science centre, where we will explore the possibility of asking the right questions, i.e. ones that perhaps “... will generate the excitement they deserve”. Using a dialogical approach we will examine whether it is possible to create curiosity with an investigative and reflective behaviour in some visitors. At the Experimentarium four young visitors will encounter a selection of setups. Is there perhaps something that creates wonder? And what are “the right questions”?

Creating dialogue and reflection

To explore this wonder, the two researchers created a project designed to get students at science centres to engage in dialogue and thus reflect on their experiences. The dialogue is initiated by a guide who could be a teacher or a museum instructor. In our project the researcher will enter as a guide/conversation partner with one or more pupils (hereinafter called informants) and take on the role of participant observer. This model is inspired by Ingemann’s video-walks, where he entered into conversation with an informant in a museum based on a set of rules as a researcher (2006; see also chapter 8). Meanwhile, the informants wear a hat or glasses with built-in video cameras and microphones to record what they see and say and where they move. The conversation rules are to conduct a process dialogue, which is a conversation carried out on the informants’ premises about the setup of each new installation or setup. The researcher then performs a work dialogue, which is a series of questions about how informants have experienced the installation and what ideas they have come up with. Video and audio recordings represent the material used to reveal what the informants have experienced, including understanding the definitions and interpretations informants make (see chapters 9 & 10).

Based on Ingemann’s process and work dialogues, we have produced a design in which one of the authors takes the role of guide and interlocutor for four informants comprised of first-year high school students who are 16 years of age. The conversations took place at the Experimentarium, where the researcher (the one author) walked around the exhibition with one or two informants to seven pre-selected installations.

While walking, the researcher talked with and asked the informants about installations. The questions that the researcher asked were either

open-ended and general or planned and therefore specific to the installation in question. The open, general questions were e.g.: “*What do you think about this?*”; “*What would you tell your friends back in class about this installation?*”; “*What does this installation make you to think of?*”; “*Do you know if this phenomenon is something in your daily life?*”; “*Does it surprise you?*”; and “*How do you think this is possible?*”

Planned, detailed questions create *wonder images* designed to help informants interpret the installation. A wonder image involves asking questions such as: “*What if I say California and skyscrapers?*” When this question is posed in relation to a setup about building earthquake proof buildings out of cinder blocks, the idea draws an association to California and skyscrapers, pushing the informant to wonder how such tall buildings can withstand earthquakes and what kind of building technique is necessary. Another example is to ask: “*If I say headlights does that give you any associations?*” These wonder images are related to an installation with dishes where two people can whisper to each other from many feet away across a noisy room (exhibition hall) and still hear each other because they each whisper through dishes directed towards each other. The dishes amplify the sound waves much like the light from ordinary bulbs in headlights is amplified by the dish behind it.

Selection of setups and informants

The seven exhibits selected represent a variation in level of complexity, popularity and academic content. Certain statements provide technical material that is not easily understood by visitors seven years and older, while other exhibits cover technical material easily understood by visitors seven years and older, i.e. there is a mixture of complex and simple setups (Boisvert & Slez 1995). Other variations consist in the availability of setup concepts. If the concept is clear from the actual three-dimensional appearance of the setup, it is ‘concrete’. If however reading a long text on either a label or a screen is necessary to begin using the setup and to understand what the point is, it is ‘abstract’ (Boisvert & Slez 1995). Another selection criterion is variability in popularity. An earlier study involving high school students and their interest and exposure to exhibits at the Experimentarium shows which exhibits are especially popular among this group and which ones are not (Quistgaard 2006).

The exhibits selected for this study with respect to variation in popularity are based on this study. The final selection criterion is related to variation in the academic content. The seven exhibits span a wide spectrum of academic content ranging from physics, geophysics and geography to physiology and psychology. For each of the seven setups we have prepared two to three wonder images similar to the ones about skyscrapers in California, headlights and parabolic shapes.

The four informants are two girls and two boys from two randomly selected classes in the local community near the Experimentarium.

Different learning styles

In all, the researcher did three walks comprising seven installations divided into two walks with one informant and one walk with two informants. The starting point of the three walks was that the researcher did not know anything about the informant's prior knowledge and interests, thus preventing an a priori adaptation of the questions and wonder images to the individual. In addition to meeting each informant where they were, the researcher's premise was that individual informant's would each respond differently during the walk. The analysis of the dialogues shows that the four informants had different learning styles and were affected differently by the dialogue with the researcher with respect to their reflections, interpretations and understanding. We have used McCarthy's (1997) four learning styles to characterise the informants. Based on Kolb (1984), McCarthy defines the following four types of learning styles as:

- **Type 1: People with an innovative learning style** are primarily interested in personal relevance. They need a reason to learn and like causes, linking the new information with their personal experience and establishing new information usable in their everyday lives. Some important teaching approaches that are effective for this type of learning are group work, brainstorming and interdisciplinarity (e.g. integration of science with social science or writing with visual art). In summary, type-1 people wonder, "Why do I need to know this?"

- **Type 2: People with an analytical learning style** are primarily interested in obtaining skills to enhance their understanding of concepts and processes. They are able to effectively learn from lectures and enjoy hearing about research, data analysis and what 'experts' have to say. In summary, type-2 people wonder, "What does this mean and what is the challenge for me?"

- **Type 3: People with a 'commonsense' learning style** are primarily interested in how things work. They like participatory activities and trying things themselves. Concrete, experimental learning activities are the best approach for them, i.e. working hands-on and using their bodies (kinaesthetic experiences). In summary, type-3 people wonder, "How can I use this in my life?"

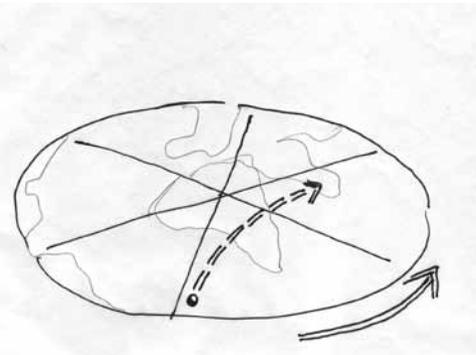
- **Type 4: People with a dynamic learning style** are primarily interested in autonomous discovery. They rely pretty much on their own intuition and try to teach both themselves and others. Any form of self-study is an effective approach for these individuals. They also enjoy computer games; role-plays and games in general. In summary, type-4 people ask themselves, "If I do this, what opportunities will it create for me?"

The female informant who walks alone with the researcher, *Cecilie*, has a 'commonsense' type-3 style because her approach to interacting with exhibits and the dialogue is quite practically oriented. She wants to do, try and see what happens and test things using a hands-on approach. Kinaesthetic experiences that require the use of her whole body appear to act strongly on her. Setups where she uses or tests her own body appeal to her more than setups involving more reflection than action and that primarily relate to external phenomenon (external to her own body).

One of the male informants who walks alone with the researcher, *Bert*, is an analytical type-2 person, because he obviously enjoys obtaining new knowledge he can use in school. In general, he is quite focused on school and finds it hard to relate his experiences during the walk to everyday life or other situations outside of that context. He also appears to be uncomfortable and insecure in situations involving the start of a new activity. He immediately tries to get the 'expert' (the researcher) to tell him exactly what the meaning of the setup is and what the 'rules' for using the installation are before he is willing to engage in dialogue and answer questions. In the few instances where he realises he has misunderstood the task (although not a huge mistake), he seems almost to panic. After mastering the rules and convinced that he has understood the meaning of the task, he is completely confident and able to explain the phenomenon or concept at a high level. He is also eager to respond properly and is subsequently satisfied with his own abilities.

The two informants who walk together with the researcher are exceptionally innovative in their actions and words during most of their walk, so their overall learning style is defined as innovative type 1. The female informant, *Anna*, is good at reflecting on the way into an activity and before she starts an activity. She wonders for example of why a setup or action is relevant, which is quite typical for an innovative type-1 personality. She is also good at connecting various components, seeing contexts and relating the installations to other situations.

The male informant, *Anton*, is also good at reflecting during and after an activity and at trying to explain it. He is not as good as *Anna* is at connecting the experience to other situations, but is quick to catch her associations and follows her. He typically acts before he reflects; his learning style therefore seems to be a combination of commonsense and innovative as opposed to a purely innovative. The approach of the two informants to their interaction with one another however is exceedingly innovative. They often have lengthy dialogues with each other about what they do and why and involve and connect their experiences to personal experiences. They challenge each other, give support and brainstorm together.



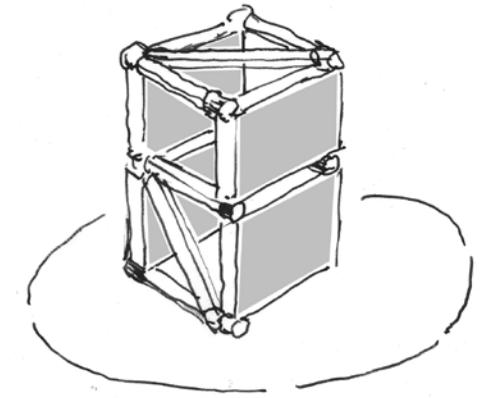
Ill. 12.1: 'The rotating planet' illustrates the influence of the Earth's rotation on horizontal movements on the planet, e.g. winds. Visitors roll metal balls across the horizontal plate on top of a huge hemisphere that functions as a carousel. The balls deflect to the right when the carousel, which represents the Earth, moves leftward.

Ill. 12.2: A sketch of the deflection of the metal balls when they roll across the rotating plate.

The rotating planet and shake buildings to pieces

Our experiment shows that a *question-promoting* approach challenges the different routes to learning the informants represent. In the following we will show examples of how each of the four informants is influenced by the dialogue with the researcher. This part of our analysis uses two of the seven installations deemed to represent the variation among the setups. One of them is 'The rotating planet' (Ill. 12.1), which is about the influence of the Earth's rotation on horizontal movements on a planet called Coriolis Force. The analogy presented in the setup is a carousel in the form of a hemisphere with an annotated map, which rotates clockwise (like the Earth) and a horizontal plate placed on top. When the visitor rolls a metal ball across the plate, it will deflect to the right because of the carousel's leftward rotation (Ill. 12.2).

The rotating planet is both complex and abstract, i.e. it is not an easy installation to use or to understand - not even for high school students. It has also proved to be among the less popular setups at the Experimentarium (Quistgaard 2006). The second installation, 'Shake buildings to pieces', is also among the less popular setups. With the exception of their shared lack of popularity, the parameters of the two setups differ significantly. The academic content of the setups deals with two completely different topics and 'Shake buildings to pieces', which is about earthquake resistant design techniques, is easy to use (i.e. concrete) and easy to un-



Ill. 12.3: 'Shake buildings to pieces' is about earthquake resistant design techniques. On a disc, the visitor builds a construction out of wooden sticks and blocks equipped with Velcro to hold them together. When construction is finished the visitor can test its stability by pressing a button that makes the disc vibrate.

Ill. 12.4: A sketch of one of the informant's constructions that proved to be earthquake resistant.

derstand (i.e. simple). There is a presentation that demonstrates how some types of structures are more resistant to seismic shocks than others. On a disc, visitors can make buildings and other structures with wooden blocks and sticks of various shapes and sizes equipped with Velcro on the sides to hold them together (Ill. 12.3). Once a construction is finished, the visitor can test its durability by pressing a button that makes the disc vibrate. Wooden sticks are used as cross braces in the strongest constructions (Ill. 12.4).

Dialogue with the informants

Bloom's cognitive taxonomy, which has six levels ranging from "... the simplest to the most complex and from the known to the unknown ..." (Dolin 2006), was used to analyse how informants were influenced by and responded to our question-promoting approach. The following section explains how the six levels: 1) knowledge, 2) understanding, 3) application, 4) analysis, 5) synthesis and 6) evaluation were used to assess the informants' statements when exposed to the rotating planet and shake buildings to pieces.

The rotating planet

Initially, at the rotating planet setup, *Cecilie* is not especially reflective about why the metal balls are deflected to the right, but the question-

promoting approach puts her in the process of reflecting on what she is experiencing. The progression of her statements while in dialogue with the researcher clearly illustrate that she is moving from not knowing or understanding the phenomenon to analysing and diagnosing why it happens. For instance, she furiously works to get the balls to roll straight across the plate and regards the fact that they get deflected as an error. This is also the case even though the researcher makes her aware that they are, "... *sitting on something that turns*" and this "... *gives some picture of what's happening*". She replies simply, "*Yeah, yeah - sure. It's very strange, but I don't ...*" At this point she interrupts herself and has nothing more to say about what she has experienced. She begins a verbalised thought process only when the researcher, after a slight pause, asks her if she knows, "... *why the balls are rotating to the right*". Her first reflection is at the simplest levels of Bloom's taxonomy namely, knowledge (level 1), which is to remember and reproduce. She reproduces the researcher's assertion that they are on something that turns and that this might have something to do with the deflection. But then she is moving in the direction of that deflection having something to do with attraction.

Through the researcher's questions and presentation of wonder images, Cecilie reaches the analysis level (level 4) during their dialogue. One of the wonder images is that the informant should try to imagine being on a carousel and standing at the centre of its axis. At the same time another person, called B, is on the edge of the carousel and a third person, called C, is to the right of B, also near the edge. Next, the informant should picture what happens if she throws a ball to B. If the carousel were stationary, B would catch the ball, but if the carousel was rotating to the left, C would catch the ball even though it was aimed at B. This wonder image and other questions triggered Cecilie's ability to analyse the situation and come up with, "... *it is not really the ball that is skewed; it's just the target itself and the base area that moves*". She does not reach a higher level of taxonomy than analysis, since she is unable to relate and generalise her analysis to other contexts, which would be characteristic for the next level: synthesis.

The other informant who walked alone with the researcher, Bert, did not seem as uncomfortable and unsure of himself when he and the researcher entered into a dialogue about the rotating planet. Already familiar with the phenomenon, he demonstrates how the ball will rotate to the side, which also indicates that his starting level is clearly higher than Cecilie's. We have interpreted his level to be understanding (level 2) because he is able to describe and recognise the phenomenon. His incorrect explanation about the force of gravity however shows that he is unable to interpret or apply the phenomenon, which is entirely due to Earth's rotation. Bert's view is a misconception or everyday understanding that can be addressed by confronting it. The researcher tries to help him by using

the question-promoting approach and using wonder images. To achieve level 3, the researcher encourages Bert to think about how it would feel on his own body by asking leading questions such as, "Is there anything you can connect to your daily life?" The result is that he reaches levels 4-5, analysis and synthesis. For example he refers to wonder images such as hurricanes in the Caribbean¹ and the west wind.² Especially wonder images of the west wind give him an understanding of how the Earth's rotation controls the global wind systems and how this relates to what he experiences when he rolls a ball across the plate on top of the rotating carousel. The researcher had to work hard to encourage his thought process and often had to reformulate questions several times, resorting to new wonder images and giving a bit of explanation to get the informant to reflect. Evidently, this informant has a need to feel safe before he throws himself into reflecting.

The two informants, who walked together, Anna and Anton, reached a cognitive understanding of the rotating planet that approached the highest level of the cognitive taxonomy. Like Bert, Anna and Anton do not initially reflect on why the bullets deflect. But triggered by the researcher's wonder images on the carousel and a ball being thrown, they begin to connect deflection with the rotation of the carousel. They are also aware that it is not the ball's direction that changes or is influenced by something, but the ground moving under the ball. This recognition shows that they have achieved cognitive level 3, application, in the taxonomy. They climb toward the next level when Caribbean wonder images about hurricanes that always rotate clockwise are included. This leads Anna and Anton to think about whether the Earth's rotation causes water to swirl when it drains from a bathtub. A bathtub is a small system influenced by local factors so their guess is not entirely correct, but the association leads to an interesting dialogue between the two informants, where they jointly reflect, analyse and compare. The researcher upgraded the level of the dialogue as appropriate by providing counter questions for the informants that forced them to reflect on their own statements and that encouraged them to continue in a particular direction.

The wonder images of the west wind bring Anna and Anton up to taxonomy level 6, evaluation, because the images and questions from the researcher lead to a dialogue in which they relate to the whole planet as a system, including differences between the northern and southern hemispheres in terms of wind systems and the sun's position relative to the compass. They are critical and evaluative in their reflections and they contrast and evaluate their own, each other's and the researcher's statements, which is characteristic of level 6. Anna led the way in their progression, contributing significantly to Anton's recognition process.

Shake buildings to pieces

In the earthquake setup, *Cecilie* immediately starts making buildings to test a variety of constructions. Beginning at level 1 of the taxonomy, she talks about which constructions work and which ones do not. When the researcher introduces wonder images of skyscrapers in California, i.e. how can there be skyscrapers in an earthquake zone such as California, she begins to reflect more on her experience. She demonstrates both use and analysis by relating her experience to her own knowledge and experiences and by consciously using and expressing her acquired knowledge to build new and improved designs.

Bert does not immediately start building anything, but waits until he has received help from the researcher and feels sure about what the purpose is and what he must do. He begins at taxonomy level 3, application, because he considers various techniques such as the advantageous of not building too high, i.e. he applies and interprets the knowledge he has. The researcher uses this reflection as a springboard to apply the California skyscraper wonder images to question the informant's interpretation, which subsequently entails a series of reflections in which the informant analyses and tests different ideas and relates them to self-knowledge. The dialogue with the researcher puts Bert at level 4, analysis.

A similar process occurs with Anna and Anton, who immediately begin building just as Cecilie did, quickly reaching level 3, application. The difference compared to the individual informants who walked alone with the researcher is that Anna and Anton make more verbal reflections on and interpretations of their experiences, apparently because they are together and engage in dialogue with each other. Like the other two, Anna and Anton also remain in the situation and are unable to independently come out of the context, analyse their experiences or relate them to other contexts. They remain at the application level until the researcher gives them the wonder images on skyscrapers, which again has the same power to initiate a series of analytical and related reflections. For example Anna connects her experiences with and reflections on the building techniques used in the World Trade Center, mentioning that construction errors could have been the cause of the Center's collapse during the 2001 terrorist attack on the US.

One year later

To explore how the informants have been affected by their walks with the researcher in the longer term, we interviewed the four informants a year later. The interviews occurred at their respective schools and were carried out by the same researcher who had walked with them. The procedure for the four interviews was to get the informants to describe their experiences of the walk, including the exhibits they interacted with; what they remembered about them and how these experiences had af-

ected them since. Then they were presented with photos of all the installations and again asked to describe what they remembered. Overall, the four informants remembered a good deal of their walks, although three of them needed photographs to jog their memories. Cecilie remembers six out of seven of the installations on her own without the help from photos, in contrast to the others, who only independently remember three or four installations. Besides remembering large parts of their experiences, the walks do not seem to have influenced Cecilie and Anton into changing their behaviour. Cecilie however has thought about and can explain and identify the academic points from two of the seven installations while Anton can explain and identify parts of the academic points from two setups.

Bert and Anna, in contrast, were affected in terms of changed behaviour and this is with regard to their interaction and dialogue on the rotating planet. Bert applied the knowledge he acquired on the relationship between the west wind and the Earth's rotation in a geography test at school almost a year after the walk. He recalls clearly the influence of the Earth's rotation on horizontal movements, such as wind systems, and moreover, he has thought about this phenomenon several times. It seems clear that there may not be other sources for his understanding than the walk at the Experimentarium. Also, Anna has been affected in relation to the rotating planet and, like Bert, she has applied the knowledge she gained in a school context. Approximately four months after the walk, she was in physics class, where she explained the link between the Earth's rotation and wind systems. She also exhibits a clear recollection of the phenomenon and has thought about it several times since. Again, there seems to be no other source of understanding than the walk at the Experimentarium.

The method of creating dialogue, raising questions and using wonder images has an immediate impact on the actual experience in the moment - but surprisingly it has also created a memory of the situation that is apparently stored as more permanent knowledge and understanding.

Can science centres serve as learning spaces?

It is increasingly common for schools to see science centres as a learning space. Despite the schools' growing interest, it is not unambiguously a good idea to spend a full or half day visiting a science centre. Some studies show that to be permanently affected in terms of interests and skills, the students at science centres need preparation and dialogue and to be given direction during the visit as well as follow-up activities (Rennie & McClafferty 1995; Griffin 2004; Frøyland & Langholm 2009). The dialogue aspect is to some extent met during family visits, since parents often act as guides for the children by reading the explanatory text, which then becomes a starting point for talking about and using a given instal-

lation and by building bridges between the exhibits being experienced and the children's existing knowledge (Borun et al. 1996; Ash 2003).

This professional dialogue rarely takes place when students visit a science centre. For instance, a Swedish study shows that students are not able to translate their fascination of the setups to curiosity and to subsequently ask themselves questions. As a result they never reach the point where they begin to seek an explanation (Axelsson 1997). A similar study reinforces the importance of guided dialogue through school visits to science centres. This study shows that high school students left to freely interact with installations without guidance or interference from their teacher or a guide engage in the process and seem to have fun, but they make only a few reflections on their own interactions during the visit (Quistgaard 2006). Other studies show that teachers rarely either prepare or guide their students during visits to science centres and they do not work with the visit subsequently (Sorensen & Kofod 2004; Griffin & Symington 1997).

In summary, science centres are good at creating an engaging experience for schoolchildren, but it takes more than the actual interaction with setups to create lasting interests and experiences. In other words, it is difficult for students to translate the experience into reflection. This study has tried to challenge this problem by implementing a specific design to provoke a different behaviour, i.e. reflective behaviour.

Discussion

This project demonstrates that students who are guided or helped by questions and wonder images manage to reflect on and process their experiences and relate them to other contexts much more than students left to their own resources without a guide or teacher. We have shown that the question-promoting approach encourages students to reach even high levels in Bloom's cognitive taxonomy, and that long-term effects can be detected. At first glance the long-term effects do not seem overly impressive, since they primarily relate to one of seven installations, but a study of comparable informants not guided or helped during a visit to Experimentarium revealed that one year later they had not thought about the visit or were unable to recall academic points about the installations they had seen and experienced (Quistgaard 2006).

We have also shown that the question-promoting approach can take into account the pupils' different learning styles, because the guide, who in this study was the researcher, but who could just as well have been a teacher or museum guide, can adapt the questions asked. This can be done by providing a bit of explanation and then adding additional information if the student has concerns or to relate it to the learner's own statements and thus stimulate reflection. The questions can also be designed to help students break out of the context and relate their experi-

ences to other contexts and thus increase the likelihood that they will transfer what they experience at the science centre to other contexts like school or everyday life.

The limitation of this study is that it was performed on only one or two students at a time. In reality, teachers are responsible for 25-30 students when they visit a science centre. The approach used in this study is not necessarily applicable to large groups. We propose that the method can be organised and used in other ways, e.g. the teacher can divide the class into groups and either walk around between the groups and guide/help the students by using the question-promoting approach and/or appoint a guide to each of the smaller groups. The latter suggestion would require having practiced prior to visiting the science centre. A third possibility, which would complement the suggested approach for teachers nicely, would be trained guides provided by the science centres who would go around to small groups and practice the method with them. We have shown that this method has potential and that it is much more productive for a teacher or guide to ask students questions than to let them walk around freely. It is our hope that teachers and guides will be inspired by our research to try the method and different approaches outlined here.

What questions should be asked at an art museum?

At a science centre, it is quite obvious what the academic content of each installation is and thus perhaps also the type of questions that can be posed. But what about an art exhibition? Is it so simple there? Can questions facilitate the dialogical processes, and if so how and in what way does it make sense to try the approach described in this chapter? Given Ingemann's video-walk at an art museum, we will briefly try to relate our results to art museums (Gjedde & Ingemann 2008:75-96). Ingemann has identified four fields in the visitor's experience at an art museum: action, knowledge, emotion and values, each of which corresponds to categories that constitute the experience, but also that allow thinking in learning spaces that can be supported in the dialogical process.

If visitors can remain in a learning space where another person focuses their attention to create space for questions that can go into, around and between works, visitors can create meaning. The use of Ingemann's video-walk at an art exhibit shows that a guide can create this space by asking visitors questions that make them go into, around and in between the artworks (Gjedde & Ingemann 2008:75-96). In this way visitors are stimulated to ask questions about the works that are meaningful to them, thus helping them to make sense of the experience. The question-promoting approach therefore also seems to be fruitful in art museums (see also Venke, Illeris & Örtengren 2009).

Conclusion

The literature shows that students at science centres need help to make sense of installations. In this case study we have shown that one possible means is a question-promoting approach, where a museum guide, teacher or other party enters into a dialogue with students and uses wonder images to encourage students to interact and explore their ideas. As demonstrated in this study, this approach makes students ask questions about the setups and relate their experience to other contexts, thus causing them to reflect on and make sense of their experience. Furthermore, our study indicates that the question-promoting approach accommodates students with different learning styles and thus different approaches to developing exhibits at a science centre.

Ingemann's art museum video-walk suggests that a similar approach could be fruitful at art museums and perhaps even more so because art museums are at times more exclusionary than science centres. The goal is to find questions that get visitors to self-question and reflect in order to help them give their museum experiences meaning. Another goal involves meeting visitors where they are. The questions to be asked are not to be asked of the museum but to be asked of and by the visitors.

Notes

- 1 Caribbean hurricanes, frequently covered in the media, are tropical cyclones, which consist of thunderstorms and wind that begin to rotate because of the earth's rotation. In the Caribbean, which is in the northern hemisphere, hurricanes always rotate to the right, which is visible on satellite images, because of the Earth's leftward rotation.
- 2 The reason why the west wind is dominant in our part of the world is the Earth's westward rotation. If the Earth did not rotate, global wind systems would be guided by the air warmed at the Equator that would subsequently rise up and flow toward the cold poles. This would result in a dominant wind direction in the Northern Hemisphere from south to north because the Earth's rotation deflects the northbound wind to the east. Because winds are named based on their origin and not where they are heading, this wind is called the west wind.

Chapter 13: Speaking places, places speaking – A transvisual analysis of a site

Experiences are a productive activity and can create something. They can also involve more than just the senses. They must be guided by our attention and that attention must be channelled by our interest or a goal. This is reflected in Fyfe and Ross' interesting conclusion that, "museums are good to think with" (1996:148). Their research moved museology from the museum as a physical entity and out into the landscape and its surroundings so that it could be seen with a specific gaze: that of culture and history.

With cities for instance cities, we should ask the following questions: What is a city? What kind of gaze do we need to use? How do we construct the right gaze? What should we scrutinise and how should we deal with the complexity? Finally, are the questions we are asking the right ones?

This chapter initially focuses on what appears to be a simple, open question: What is Paris? Later, the idea that "museums are good to think with" will also be further explored. This chapter will also develop the idea that learning goes beyond learning something from what the text or objects communicate on site. An effort will be made to look at the social creation of content and to see the creative process of producing something such as a media product as a process that implies tacit knowledge and hidden learning. Tacit knowledge and hidden learning can be made accessible for analysis in what Mitchell calls "showing seeing" (2002:86).

It can be difficult to make a city accessible for analysis and to put it on display, but the thinking that occurs and the attention put on a city, for example Paris, may turn it into a *visual event* (Mirzoeff 1999:13).

The speaking places

To find out what Paris is, this project scrutinises the analysis of the place that leads to the creative production of the exhibition, i.e. the city,

and the process of production. The main idea is to transform the complexity of the city and the place into something more manageable like a picture. In this respect the visual becomes more than just communication or something aesthetic to be looked at; the visual becomes a new analytical tool to undertake what I term a *transvisual* analysis. 'Trans' stands for 'transformative', namely to follow this picture-on-picture-on-picture process, i.e. Paris as a place, and then adds a new layer that involves analysing the physical place as an image, namely that a natural visual environment has to be transformed into an image.

American educational researcher Donald Schön's theory of *reflection-in-action* puts not only the analytical process of creating new images into perspective but also the physical and intuitive insights created by the visual action (1983). The goal of the transvisual method is to create a new context, namely the communicating exhibition.

Experiences involving places and media are basically phenomenological and marked by the encounter with the human body. The Australian arts theoretician Jill Bennett argues that the affective meeting creates meanings, but it does not carry a straightforward semiotic reading of signs. She believes that physical meetings are meaningful because they are *encountered signs*, and these can only be felt or sensed. They transmit meaning through what we feel with the body and not by what we observe and think. A kiss on the cheek or a slap has an immediate impact on us because we feel the action in our bodies. These two actions have very different meanings, but they are both *encountered signs*. The kinaesthetic sensations of movement we experience with our bodies when we move through space are also *encountered signs* (Bennett 2005:7).

In the encounter with visuality in the world we can explore and identify meanings which can be bodily anchored as tacit knowledge that is difficult to put into words (Polanyi 1966). The Swedish art historian Jan-Gunnar Sjölin argues that using images to interpret other images adds new and often more bodily aspects to the traditional verbal interpretation. He believes that,

... one must also require an interpretation that contributes to further elucidate and clarify the content of the image interpreted ... and that interpretation must be more or less different than the image interpreted (Sjölin 1993:42-43).

In the following I will pursue this photo-on-picture way through visuality and the metaphors that can reveal tacit knowledge.

The first transvisual analysis

"Where should the camera stand?" is a rhetorical question attributed to the Danish documentary film director Theodor Christensen. It is

still good and relevant to also ask, Are you looking at a complex reality or a mediated representation? What should be emphasised and extracted? What is important? Why is it important? Who is it important for? Where should it be used? How? What can it tell? Who does it say something about?

These questions can be asked about Paris (Ingemann 2003:13-49) using a transvisual analysis, which is really quite simple. It involves using images to explore the visual and/or reusing images to detect visual expression. As will be explained below, the method has five parts that will be described not with definitions but examples. Creating a definition is difficult, so prototypical examples will be used to clarify and state what is new. This approach justifies the lengthy, detailed sections on the learning process.

A transvisual analysis comprises five theoretically distinct phases: 1) the visual idea and concept; 2) the visual rules; 3) the visual transformation; 4) the visual uncovering; and 5) the visual communication [Ill. 13.1].

1) Visual idea and concept

The visual idea and concept focuses on finding the cracks and irritations in the traditional schemes of seeing a highly familiar place. The traditional snapshot from Paris is a 10x15 cm colour image showing someone the photographer knows in front of an iconic Parisian monument or building musealised over time because of its persistent visuality and constant repetition. The person, perhaps a woman, is photographed in front of e.g. the Eiffel Tower, the Louvre, the Arc de Triumph or Sacre Coeur. Through this visuality, these famous places appear in a new but familiar context in which the woman is completely familiar to her family as e.g. a mother, sister, daughter or mistress. There is a link between the familiar, the known in the family and the well-known in Paris. This 'knownness' turns Paris into something almost invisible, making it difficult to see the city through the famous sites. They become like a collection of scalps tourists hang from their belts to proclaim to the world, Look, I've been there! (Annis 1994).

The goal of the transvisual analysis in this chapter is to discover Paris by ignoring the well-known places that have turned the city streets into a museum and to explore the more anonymous non-places. My starting point is a map of Paris, which I happened to get from a travel agent, which appears to be sponsored by McDonald's. So, we have America in Paris.

There are numerous red squares on the map indicating where there is a McDonald's restaurant. I arbitrarily decide that I will photograph 16 different McDonald's. Consequently, I now know where the camera should stand.

2) Visual rules

The visual rules clarify how I am going to do the photographs and how the images are going to be used and installed. The four general rules I create are:

a) The timeframe for taking the photographs of the 16 McDonald's is one week. I choose them based on two criteria. They must be geographically dispersed across central Paris and they must represent a mixture of places comprising well-known Parisian sites, monuments and buildings and non-descript, neutral sites.

b) I want to photograph each McDonald's using a digital camera that can take 3 to 6 images to create a panorama photo. The time of day will be randomly selected; the quality of the daylight, depending on weather and time of day, will be unpredictable; the available scenarios will also be variable as will the temporal trajectory in the photograph, where the 3-6 pictures will be taken over several minutes at different intervals.

c) The images from each site will be later processed and put together using a digital program to form one coherent photograph. The edge of each picture will be visible, making it possible to see where one photo ends and the next one begins (see Ill. 13.2).

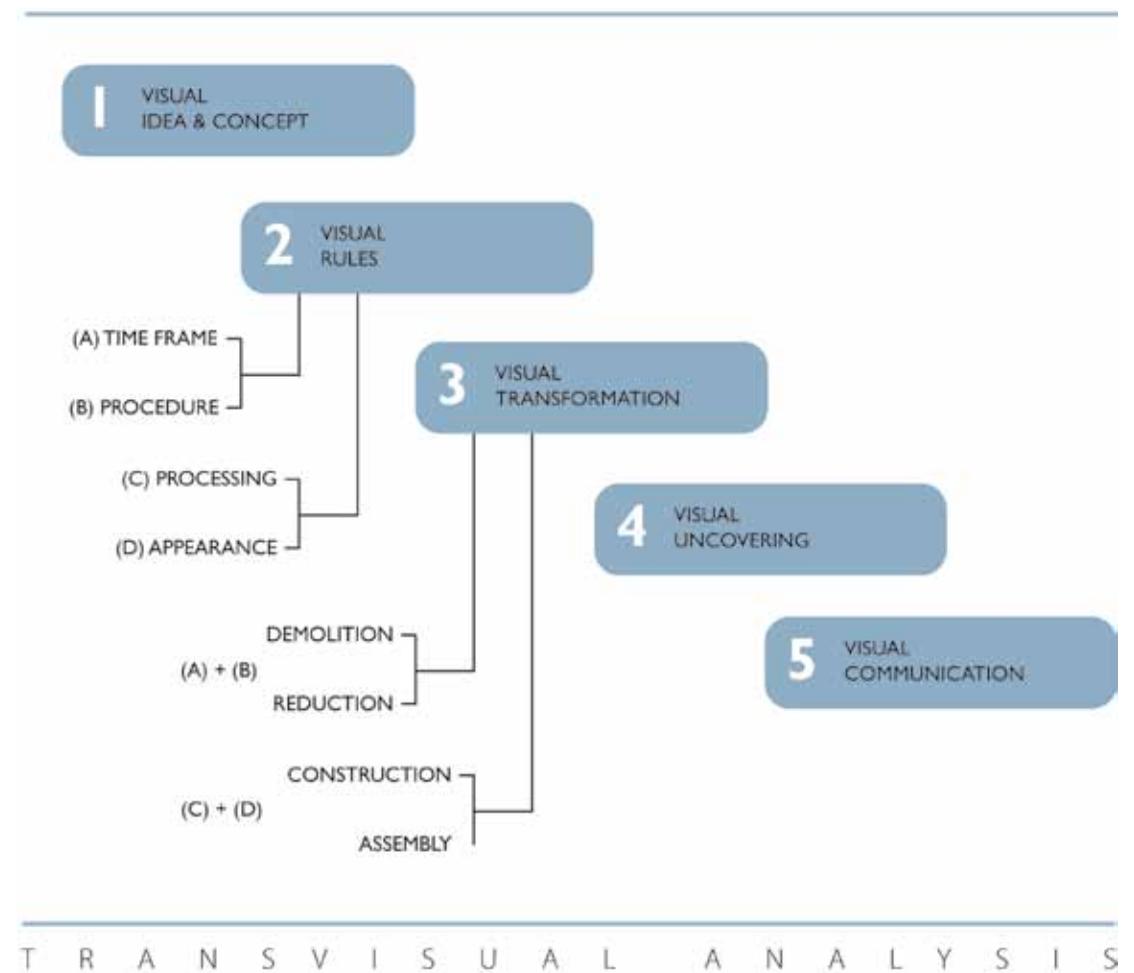
d) Contrary to drawings and paintings, photographs have no solid, original size. I decide that the amalgamated panorama photos should have a print size of 38x100-220 cm; most of them end up being about 150 cm wide. The size will afford viewers a unique opportunity for studying the pictures. The 16 large panoramic photos will be exhibited as a contemporary art project. The aesthetic relationships are open to further investigation by the visitors, because of the pictures' spatial presentation within a narrative structure in an exhibition.

3) Visual transformation

Following a) and b) permits a *demolition* or *reduction* of the enormous amount of visual, auditory and kinaesthetic information present in the physical space of the street. This process is the first part of the construction of the *new visual transformation*. Following c) and d) also allows the creation of a new complex design based on the *construction* and *assembly* of the specified elements.

4) Visual uncovering

The process of creating a new visual form involves more than just turning one or more images into wide photographs. It is not the aesthetic expression in itself that is interesting, but rather that the images are created with the specific intent to constitute a part of the analysis of the site. The project is about the city of Paris, or more precisely what photographing the 16 sites visually uncovers about Paris. The idea is that the amalgamated images will reveal something about Paris and what is uniquely and



T R A N S V I S U A L A N A L Y S I S

Ill. 13.1: The analytical model: The five phases of the transvisual analysis are:

1) The visual idea and concept, which can be seen as the basic matter of inquiry and the starting point; 2) the visual rules, which are closely connected to 3) the visual transformation, where *framing* time and *procedures* are used as a tool to control the *demolition* and *reduction* of the visual event or the material of visual culture, while 4) the visual uncovering extracts the new visibility and in the process towards the new visual product, the values and meanings from the basic matter of inquiry are included and lead to 5) visual communication in a new context. The actual design of the individual parts of the transvisual analysis depends on the specific material and the chosen angle of inquiry.



III. 13.2: The finished panel from the installation with the panoramic photo of Rue de Caumartin. Inkjet print on 130 g heavyweight coated paper 38x178 cm, mounted on 50x200 cm MDF plate. Photographed on Wednesday 20 November 2002 from 13:06:50 to 13:07:20.

especially French. This is the issue that forms the basis of my project (see also Schön 1983/2001:229).

What is Frenchness? The sociologist Peter Hamilton identifies ten core themes of Frenchness based on humanistic photographs from the post-war period 1945-1960 (Hamilton 1997:102). Hamilton looks at photos from agencies and at what was available in the magazines photographers worked for. The photos were by photographers such as Henri Cartier-Bresson, Robert Doisneau and Willy Ronis. The ten core themes are: the street, children and play, family, love and lovers, Paris and its attractions, the homeless and marginalised, celebrations, bistros, apartments, jobs and crafts. Hamilton believes that the street is more than a visually interesting place, stating “For the humanists it is the quintessential site *par excellence* where the life of ordinary people occurs” (1997:108). Hamilton connects this with Baudelaire’s ideas of modernity, where the fundamental expression of the modern city was a world of the contingent, the transitory, the fleeting. Hamilton asserts that “... no city is more ‘modern’ than Paris” (1997:108). He also finds a tendency among photographers to take pictures that represent the city with all the ambivalent characteristics of modernism, to represent it as a well-oiled machine and a wonderful, even magical place.

What, then, defines the French humanist photographers’ paradigm? Hamilton argues that there are six key elements: 1) a focus on universal human emotions; 2) historicity by contextualisation of the image in space and time; 3) a focus on portraying everyday life; 4) empathy with the depicted; 5) the photographer’s perspective mirrors the regular population, and 6) the photographs are monochrome (1997:101). The Frenchness described is anchored in regular people, and Hamilton argues that life then appears as a ‘golden age’: hard but rewarding, not without conflict and discussion, but warm and communal - a life in which everybody shares the hardship of the era, in which social, cultural and ethnic differences were levelled (1997:148). Hamilton believes however that this ideological construction of Frenchness is outdated, since viewers no longer find themselves in a world that focuses on tributes to everyday life.

Is it possible to find something especially Parisian or French in Paris today? Is it possible to find something in Paris that is not possible to find in any other city? Will the visual characterisation of the sites selected for this project show a generic city environment? Hamilton’s study of post-war humanist photography shows that the photographers focused on the lives of the ordinary population in the streets and not on the streets themselves. There is for example the photograph of a blind accordion player on Rue Mouffetard with many people in the background. This is not the street as a site. The post-war photographs create a special ambience by capturing people’s relationships with each other. This is Frenchness and Paris.

My photographs do not have this focus. There are people, but they play a different role. They carry out everyday activities, but I have made no effort to artistically capture people in a particularly expressive moment. The visual rules I defined are designed let their actions be more casual and everyday-like. Moreover, it is not the *flâneur* that appears in my photos, but rather the post-modern shopper in a shopping centre, i.e. the marathon runner that Huyssen describes (2007). The modern consumer is fragmented and divided into a myriad of virtual worlds where extreme consumption is the norm.

You would have to search long and hard at the photographs of the 16 McDonald’s sites to find, if at all, the cosy, personal familiar shop with vegetables, flowers and newspapers. These shops have migrated into the shopping centre, the gap being filled by high-fashion and design shops. The photos show big city sites with mirror and glass, reflections and transparency.

The 16 sites are recognisable as part of today’s commercial and market-oriented lifestyle, where brand name products reign. First and foremost, it is the McDonald’s with its recognisable golden **M** on a red background. But hey! The multinational company does not adamantly use its corporate logo, choosing to allow it to appear at times without the red background. If red does appear, the shade varies from bright red to almost dark Bordeaux. Sometimes the logo is made of plastic, elsewhere it is subtly made of cloth.

A close study of the photographs of the sites shows a number of French commercial names: *Monoprix*, *Printemps*, *Charles Dane* etc., which are clear visual and textual signs designed to define the image of each store using logotypes and colours. These signs are obviously important details at each site and help to characterise what a site in Paris is. Or a site in a metropolis.

The mood that the photograph of a place creates when users encounter it falls into the realm of the *no-named*. We see it clearly, but are unable to articulate what we see and feel. The mood is closely related to the non-descript streets, intersections and roundabouts that can be labelled ‘non-places’ that we unaffectedly rush by on our way to our real goal (Augé 1995). But is talking about moods possible when the non-places are tied to a picture and not to the actual physical experience on the site? Is what we experience actually the mood of the picture and not the mood of the site?

5) Visual communication

The transvisual analysis is not finished even though the new visual transformation is complete. There are two important aspects still to be considered: one is that the new work should be presented and displayed in its new context as an installation in a room and the other is that this

installation should form the basis of a much-needed theory-based analysis, which may end up as a specific text.

Later in this chapter I will return to the importance of displaying, for example an installation, when I discuss the development of the method. First, however I will provide a theoretical answer to what can be achieved with a transvisual analysis.

What can we learn?

When I initially began developing the method with panoramic pictures of Paris I published an article that concluded with the following:

The intuitive recognition at the sites themselves and in the actual shooting situation has been expressed in more than just the pictures. It has also been expressed in the bodily experience of being on the specific sites with the experienced moods and activities. These non-linguistic experiences have been crucial for the subsequent analytical work (Ingemann 2003: 44).

This quotation proposes that there is something procedural in the actual professional practice of photographing and creating an exhibition and especially that which is difficult to talk about, but nevertheless possible to communicate about. Schön clearly points out the peculiar fact that talented creative designers, urban planners, doctors, engineers and teachers are rarely able to explain why they acted as they did when they artistically solved a difficult professional task. He finds that there is, "... an epistemology of practice implicit in the artistic, intuitive processes which some practitioners do bring to situations of uncertainty, instability, uniqueness, and value conflict (Schön 1983:49).

This premise leads to Schön imagining that professionals might ask entirely different questions when faced with a difficult professional task, for example, "What features do I notice when I recognize this thing? What are the criteria by which I make this judgment? What procedures am I enacting when I perform this skill? How am I framing the problem that I am trying to solve?" (Schön 1983:50). After enumerating this list of questions, Schön concludes that they share a common feature in that they all involve what he terms *reflection-in-action*.

The consistent approach in Schön's book, *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*, is that in each case there is a relationship between two persons and roles, between the experienced expert and the hesitating novice. As was the case for example between chief architect Quist and his student Petra. Schön explores reflection-in-action by analysing a protocol of an evaluation and dialogue about the work the student has done. Petra worked on a design for several weeks and has come to a halt.

Quist examined her drawings with her. Shortly after he took some chalk paper, put it over Petra's drawings and simultaneously provided explanations as he drew. Schön sees the design as a conversation or talk with the materials in a given situation and that, "... drawing and talking are parallel ways of designing, and together make up what I will call the *language of designing*" (1983:78). Schön is purely interested in the visual combined with the textual as a language that involves the user's professional repertoire and the use of experiments and trails. Schön believes that play and change of scale make it possible to create virtual worlds:

Virtual worlds are contexts for experiment within which practitioners can suspend or control some of the everyday impediments to rigorous reflection-in-action. They are representative worlds of practice in the double sense of »practice«. And practice in the construction, maintenance, and use of virtual worlds develops the capacity for reflection-in-action, which we call artistry (Schön 1987:69).

This is not art in any formal or work-related understanding, but rather a thinking that is very processual, as the various excerpts below from Schön's writing indicate:

... the practitioner gives an artistic performance. He responds to the complexity, which confuses the student, in what seems like a simple, spontaneous way. His artistry is evident in his selective management of large volumes of information, his ability to spin out long lines of invention and inference, and his capacity to hold several ways of looking at things at once without disrupting the flow of inquiry [...] As the practitioner reframes the student's problem, he suggests a direction for reshaping the situation [...] The practitioner then takes the reframed problem and conducts an experiment to discover what consequences and implications can be made to follow it [...] But the practitioner's moves also produce unintended changes which give the situation new meaning [...] The unique and uncertain situation comes to be understood through the attempt to change it, and changed through the attempt to understand it. Such is the skeleton of process (1983:130-132).

"What if?" is the most fundamental question Schön asks because he believes that the practitioner's reflection-in-action is an attempt on the level of the explorative, action and hypothesis testing to change a situation (Schön 1983). Schön's theory revalues and enhances knowledge of practice as viewed from the outside by a researcher - and he believes that reflection-in-action does not necessarily take place at the moment:

A practitioner's reflection-in-action may not be very rapid. It is bounded by the "action-present", the zone of time in which action can still make a difference to the situation. The action-present may stretch over minutes, hours, days, or even weeks and months, depending on the pace of activity and the situational boundaries that are characteristic of the practice (Schön 1983:62).

Reflection-in-action in the Paris project

A crucial point in the transvisual analysis is that it is not an outside researcher who observes someone who is engaged in an act of practice. It is the practitioner himself that delimits the action-present where actions influence the situation. Schön stresses that when the practitioner displays artistry, "... his intuitive knowing is always richer in information than any description of it" (1983: 276). He sees this as an advantage because a thorough description of intuitive knowledge will produce an abundance of information.

The materiality created through a transvisual analysis brings different visualities to the analysis process, e.g. paintings, drawings, photographs, videos and spatial representations, along with a search for insights that can come out of the practitioner's own processes with the various visualities. The determining factor in dealing with the abundance of information available in the processes of the practitioner is *attention*. It is the attention given to the experience and knowledge to be emphasised by the reflection-in-action. This attention can be focused even further by looking at which fields of knowledge are actually at stake in the experience and practice situation. These four fields are: knowledge, emotion, values and actions (Gjedde & Ingemann 2008:115-120).

The *field of knowledge* is the new knowledge gained about a site, but it is also the field where known but perhaps unconscious knowledge can be recalled in the situation of the analysis. The *field of emotion* is mediated through the visual-aesthetic presentation of buildings, places and people as they appear in the situation and can be related to general feelings. This field creates moods and narratives. The *field of value* is linked to the fundamental values of culture that can be so well known that they are difficult to elicit. The *field of action* is the bodily performance on the spot, with all of the movements the whole body is involved in and which involve all of the senses.

All four of the experience fields are activated in the practitioner's processes, but which, according to Schön, become visible through an externalised dialogue between the expert and the novice. In a transvisual practice they are visible in the larger and less visual expressions that operate as a language or *cue* that can be used to start the reflective processes. This rarely happens in the moment where the action takes place, but rather during the days or months after the visual formulations have

been made and where they can still play a role in the action-present and influence the situation.

In a previous publication, I thoroughly describe and analyse the situation in photography and in the knowledge, emotional and physical forms of recognition which an analysis of the whole process can lead to. This earlier analysis concluded:

In the situation all of the visual expressions are extremely overwhelming. It is impossible to maintain all these elements and consider them at a conscious level. [...] Here ... [it] becomes the lack of control over the moment of photographing a part of the situation where the rules are the only permanent aspect and where the picture-maker must make a number of intuitive choices whose options can only be examined afterward on the pictures (Ingemann 2003:23).

Similarly, in applying the transvisual method to the question "What is Paris", it becomes clear that the surprising in the construction process occurs when the three, four, five or six individual shots are combined into a wide panoramic image and completely change the understanding of what a snapshot is, i.e. by capturing a single moment and turning it into an image that can encapsulate a perhaps 30-45-second period. This process creates an entirely new form of narrative that resembles an internal movie. The image and long time scale make this perception of the site possible. The form of the image creates a distance, which draws attention to precisely the time. The time is in the picture, but time is also in the gaze used to look at the image. There is a built-in gazing time, which requires a closer examination of the image and the potential of the image (Ingemann 2003:23).

The practitioner's use of a range of skills helps create new visualities through a series of processes. In order to provide a different kind of experience, the practitioner must continuously throughout the processes include the reflection-in-action where, "... we are stocked or are seriously dissatisfied with our performance ..." as Schön stresses. This dual vision means, "... doing extends thinking in the tests, moves and probes of experimental action, and reflection feeds on doing and its results" (Schön 1983:280).

Visual communication – again

This section looks at the last and fifth phase of transvisual analysis. Embedded in the goal of the processes of exploring, experimenting and testing through visuality and reflection-in-action is the basic idea of making a presentation, i.e. a self-explanatory installation to be seen with a stranger's eyes. In the process of examining the visual communication



Ill. 13.3 & 4: The exhibition with the public. Three panels shown in unison form a new design based on the *construction* and *assembly* of the components.

the actual transvisual analysis has also been presented. There is a significant shift from the tested visualities seen as virtual worlds and moving forward to a specific physical space. The numerous elements that are *demolished* and *reduced* are used to create a new, complex design through the *construction* and *assembly* of the components.

The photographs from each individual site were joined together, printed, cut out and then glued on a neutral gray, wooden panel measuring 50x200 cm. Out of the sixteen panels, seven were selected for the exhibition and six of them were put into two groups of three to stress and enhance the similarities and differences between the various sites. Small labels were added to the individual panels naming the sites and a special sign with text was made to introduce and explain the transvisual approach [Ill. 13.3 & 4].

When the project was complete, preparing the exhibition also proved to be a learning process. There was the elementary satisfaction of having completed a project well and in time to open the exhibition doors to more than 100 visitors who would look at and evaluate the final result. There were the multiple decisions made concerning how the form of the exhibition would influence the content of the individual pictures. The initial juxtaposition of the three panels with three panorama pictures led to replacing one panel with another. When they were finally hung on the

wall the overall design turned out to be too monotonous so a decision was made to hang 8-9 zoom-ins from one of the panels to break the uniformity. The *construction* and *assembly* of the components created new insight into the field of the Parisianness of Paris.

At this point the transvisual analysis had reached a marked shift. The reflective process had thus far raised issues and problems that were now solved and no longer annoying and did not cause further turbulence. A change occurs when (re)creating an experience for others. In other words a communicative process occurs involving a spectator in the actual situation in front of the finished work. It is a return to a highly practitioner-oriented use of the model of the experience involving the four fields of knowledge, emotion, value and action when a new focus is put on how transvisual knowledge is given in its clearest and purest form.

The knowledge and values, which have been analysed using a transvisual analysis do not appear simply as analytical and explainable in the installation but also encompass the physical and emotional, mood terms, the aesthetic and the narrative, all of which are in line with the entire transvisual approach. The transvisual analysis is related to complexity and the dissemination of the approach must obviously weave this complexity into the delivery, but it must also simultaneously lift the complex to a higher, more clarified level.

The resulting installation will be a new visual experience, which becomes available to a new user. In this case, it is not the physical street in Paris the viewer looks at. It is a scaled, altered visuality that the analysis undertaken has reduced and clarified, changing it into a narrative in which the body's involvement and movements in space have meaning. There are both semiotic signs and the chance to interpret them, but also what Bennett believes can only be felt and sensed as *encountered signs*. This leads to a question similar to where the camera should stand, only this time the question is: Where should the body stand?

The transvisual method is an ongoing learning process. I hope that my analysis demonstrates that there is the potential to learn more at goal-orientated, well-defined museum and exhibition surroundings. The first step is that visual production must be acquired to produce photos and videos, but even more important is having the opportunity to produce a visual event like "... an interaction of visual sign, the technology that enables and sustains that sign, and the viewer" (Mirzoeff 1999:13).

If the social production of form and content is taken seriously, committing more time and effort to entering into a close relationship and transformation involving the visual is necessary and must be presented clearly, which also allows the creation of a foundation for tacit learning. Schön teaches that creative processes are obvious possible ways into handling and understanding complexity through reflection-in-action but also that these processes can be facilitated and acknowledged.

PART TWO INVISIBLES OPENINGS

Invisibles - The exhibition design process

At this point we are getting close to a troublesome yet intense field of creativity and research. The epistemological interest is to unveil the subtle processes that take place when information, objects or moods have to be formulated, presented and communicated to an

audience. This is the moment of the creation of concepts and ideas in a specific context and, sometimes, at a specific site. In order to get as deeply into the mind and processes of designers and media artists as possible, I examine their processes by following one person and his relation to colleagues, clients, collaborators and the audience in the exhibition and museum context.

Four exemplary processes have been chosen that reveal different aspects of the creative process as well as show the various kinds of challenging situations and decisions that the case person regularly faces.

The four processes examined are: 1) the visualisation process of a an exhibition poster for public libraries on the complex and controversial topic of biotechnology; 2) the organisational conflict in a large museum reopening with a thematic exhibition for which the exhibition poster is the turning point; 3) the introduction of a poetic and artistic interpretation into a cultural and historical museum presenting ethnographic material in new media format; 4) an opportunity for the media artist to re-formulate and re-create the

memory of people and landscapes over more than three hundred years in drifting sand.

The delimitation of the field

My analysis begins by looking at a recent experience I had at the Museum of Copenhagen, which was going to do a thematic exhibition entitled 'Becoming a Copenhagen', that brought back many old memories. The museum's curator had gotten wind of the fact that I had been part of a group of enthusiastic young activists who had made a 16 mm documentary film in the summer of 1972 on 69 Gypsies living on the outskirts of Copenhagen in the Amager Common, a former dumping ground. In the 1970s the area was unused, but was equipped with a single water pump. The Gypsies, or Romany as they were known as at the time, had placed their caravans on the Common. The museum's introduction to the thematic exhibition states:

The special exhibition focuses on immigration to Copenhagen, as the catalyst of, and pre-condition for, the town's growth and change. The physical traces left by the citizens of Copenhagen in former times, the urbanisation process and immigration are particularly interesting. Immigration is, and always has been, an important factor in the history of the capital. Not just as a curious feature in the life of the town, but rather as a key ingredient in the town's growth and development. While Copenhagen probably would not exist today had it not been for the continuous stream of immigrants that contributed to its development down through history, it most definitely would not have become the metropolis with which we are familiar today without their contribution.¹

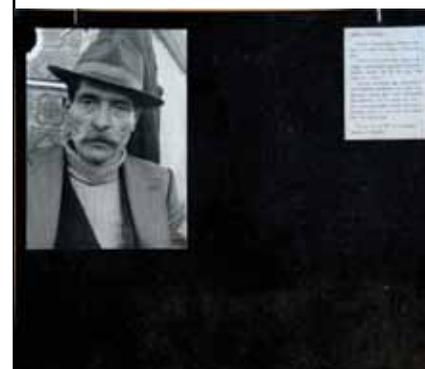
When asked whether the film could be used in the exhibition at the Museum of Copenhagen, I realised that I might still have material from the original exhibition in my cellar. Fortunately, my cellar still held two specially designed wooden transportation boxes containing 20 black chipboards. They had remained unopened since being placed there in perhaps 1974 when the temporary exhibition was taken out of circulation after having been presented at forty libraries across Denmark over a period of two years [Ill. 14.1].

The motif for the original exhibition was the Amager Common and the life of the Gypsies that revolved around the water pump there in the summer of 1972. Made up of black and white photos, the exhibition also contained various texts, some were written by the activist group and others were photocopies taken from newspapers.²

Made up of four people, the activist group's motivation was its empathic understanding of and desire to support the Gypsies, who found



Ill. 14.1: The two wooden boxes used to transport the 20 black chipboards with black and white photographs and text to the 40 different libraries.



themselves in a tight corner. The activists' sheer enthusiasm was also one of the main driving forces behind their creative process.

In a document found in the archive there is a three-page explanation describing the basis for the entire project. The archive also contained a documentary film produced in 1972 called *Amager Common 1972*. In addition to the material for the travelling exhibition, there was a presentation of a large public political meeting at the Danish National Museum where more than 500 people discussed various cultural, humanitarian and integration issues involving the gypsies. The goal of the four young activists states:

The primary intention with our work was to prevent the Gypsies from being chased out of the country ... We tried to show the empathy we feel toward the Gypsies and their complex situation. Our aim is not to express our own view of their circumstance, but to help them bring forward their own wishes, thoughts and ideas. To the Danes, we also part of what is happening. We wanted to try to remedy the misconceptions that existed about the gypsies that we had had or that we had run into. In other words, we wanted to change attitudes that chiefly were influenced by our lack of knowledge about their culture and ways of living (Documentation 1974).

In the context of the new exhibition nearly forty years after the original documentary film was made, the exhibition, the political meeting and the various elements from the historical event are presented in the context of a theme called, 'Wanted unwanted'. [Ill. 14.2]

On the left on the wall a five-minute excerpt from the film *Amager Common 1972* is being shown. In the middle of the photo there are six black chipboards with black and white photographs, typed text and photocopies of newspaper articles. Partially obscured by a little boy's head is a yellow poster advertising the political meeting and panel debate at the National Museum of Denmark.

Incredibly, the work of four young activists aged 20 to 27 who had cooperated closely on all aspects of producing a documentary film was now on display almost forty years later. Their enthusiasm and commitment to making the film and the exhibition are still evident.

In the context of the museum exhibit three important aspects of the story of the 69 Gypsies appear. First, there is the concrete story of the rejection and later acceptance of the group of the Gypsies in 1972, the main issue that motivated three young male and one female activist to explore the matter and in the process make a film and an exhibition as well as spark a discussion. The second aspect was one's common civic duty to take care of people who need help and support to be treated as citizens. The third aspect is the actual media products, i.e. the film, the exhibition



Ill. 14.2: From the Museum of Copenhagen 2010 exhibition: On the left the film *Amager Common 1972* is being shown on the wall. In the middle are six black chipboards. Below the chipboard farthest to the right in the second row is a yellow poster, partially obscured by a little boy's head, for the political meeting and panel debate.

text and the overall visual appearance not to mention the argumentative manner tone employed and the general way of talking and creating a discourse in the 1970s. To be complete, a fourth aspect must also be taken into consideration and that is how a contemporary context reflects the 1970s but also dares to influence the discourse and attitudes in the Danish society today, which comprises groups with highly xenophobic opinions as well as a political system with a dismissive attitude.

The experience of having something I helped create become part of a museum exhibition underlines the many internal and external circumstances that influence the goal of this chapter, which is to show what the “invisibles” in the exhibition design process are, as indicated by the title of the chapter. It seems that the topic, the objects, the people interacting, the discourse, the ambiance, the ... you name it ... all influence the creative process. Fascinated and preoccupied with these processes, my aim is to get very close to them. I want to get inside the processes and articulate what is perhaps nearly impossible to narrate or follow in detail.

When Sharon MacDonald began studying the Science Museum in London 1988 she wanted to go behind the scenes and track the history of a particular exhibition in order to take her audience into the world of the museum curator and to show in vivid detail how exhibitions are created and how public culture is produced. MacDonald wanted to answer questions such as:

What goes on behind closed doors at museums? How are decisions about exhibitions made and who, or what, really makes them? Why are certain objects and styles of display chosen whilst others are rejected, and what factors influence how museum exhibitions are produced and experienced? (2002).

MacDonald observed the creation of a major permanent exhibition in the Science Museum in London on a day-to-day basis for a year before its opening in October 1989 (MacDonald 1996). In her brilliant ethnographic study of the making of *Food for Thought*, she explains that she tagged: “... along with the team [of six women, none of whom were subject experts, which was seen as a strength], scribbling my notes in a corner, asking questions, ... [I] studied the stacks of paperwork that had accumulated in the ‘Food’ offices, attended exhibitions-relevant meetings elsewhere in the museum, and interviewed staff in the Science Museum ...” (MacDonald 1996:157).

The outcome of the material she collected was important but also frustrating because the goal of the people behind the exhibition was to create something completely new that contrasted with the traditions otherwise followed at the Science Museum at that time: In contrast to those exhibitions which were written for curators rather than visitors, exhibi-

tions which were said to ‘go over people’s heads’, *Food for Thought* was to be ‘accessible’ and ‘user-friendly’ (MacDonald 1996:159).

MacDonald shows how this goal drove team members but also how they were sometimes blocked by the organisation and by the Museum’s director, who worked to move the team’s focus away from the social, political and historical aspects of the exhibition’s theme. MacDonald writes that the, “... focus almost exclusively upon technological aspects of production was justified, albeit with misgivings from some team members, with the statement: ‘we are the Science Museum after all’ (1996:163).

She stress that pre-existing definitions of science and of the perceived roles of the Science Museum were continued in this new and challenging exhibition and that it “... seemed like an exhibition less different from previous ones than talk during its making had led me to imagine” (1996:164).

In many ways I share her interests and questions concerning *what*, *how* and *why* certain factors influence how exhibitions are produced, but my focus and interests differ from MacDonald’s in two respects. First, MacDonald focuses on museum exhibitions and I want to go beyond the museum and into a broader use of exhibitions on other kinds of sites. The exhibitions could be theme driven, enthusiasm driven, aesthetically driven, research driven or politically driven and placed in libraries, city halls, on the streets, in workplaces, in the open air along a stream, in experience centers or, last but not least, even a museum.

The exhibition MacDonald studied was 810m² and had a budget of £ 1.2 million. In the context of the Science Museum this also led her to focus on the internal organisational conflicts that influenced the production of the exhibition. My interest is different. I narrow the perspective down to small exhibitions or minor parts of larger exhibitions. For example, when I analyse the creative production process I look at a small poster exhibition on biotechnology for libraries and in another case I look at the making of a multi-screen show that is a minor part of an experience centre.

In contrast to MacDonald, who follows an entire team daily for over a year on a day-to-day basis, I had to come up with a more sophisticated concept for the research process. The most important part of the concept involves following one person in the production process in order to get close to the creative process as it happens in real time. The questions of *what*, *how* and *why* do not focus on the overall organisation or team, but centre more narrowly on how people get their ideas and concepts and how these ideas and concepts enter into the world as words, sketches, photographs, documents, timelines, notebooks or whatever physical form the invisible process ends up being consolidate into and expressed in.

Following someone this closely is almost impossible because the process can take place over seconds, minutes, hours, weeks, months or

even years – and in many places, e.g. in the workshop, on a train, in the bath, at meetings, in bed, on a walk in town or in the woods, while swimming etc. (Csikszentmihalyi 1996).

The only person you are close to one-hundred percent of the time everywhere is yourself. If you want to follow the processual experience in a sort of reflection-in-action you have to be open to introspection. As a result, I have chosen to do an introspective analysis in the tradition of phenomenology, experimental psychology and semiotic sign theory as found in Ronald Barthes' work, who, in his autobiography, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, turned towards himself as a text to be studied. Developing methods designed to allow close examination of actual practice can lead to an upgrade of the practice-learned insights to a level where tacit knowledge is revealed (Polanyi 1967). Consequently, research in creative processes becomes more vivid and more related to actual practice, in addition to developing approaches for opening the black box of design processes.

Introspection is not easy. When you create something you are in a flow or state of contemplation as a vivid living person who is making an attempt to be unaffected and undisturbed by arbitrary phone calls, meetings or mails (Csikszentmihalyi 1996:120). But the most annoying disturbances and dissonance come from the creative person himself. Being in the flow and in contemplation can be disturbed by switching from a creative, constructive mode to an analytical and more rational one. When Donald Schön was working on developing his theory of reflection-in-action his goal was to follow the creative processes and to solve the problem of switching between various modes. In his wonderful book, *The Reflective Practitioner*, Schön ends up following a teaching or supervising situation where someone who is not so experienced meets someone who is.

Teaching or supervising

In the early 1970s, working as an art director and graphic designer, I became deeply engaged in the growing environmental movement in Denmark. The group, called NOAH (after the Biblical figure), consisted of many young people with specialist knowledge. Although I did not have expert knowledge on environmental issues, I contributed to the group with my professional knowledge about communication and design. Our collaboration lasted eight years and one of our most important, time-consuming endeavours was an exhibition. After nine months of preparation, the work of fifty people resulted in the opening of a huge exhibition in the Copenhagen town hall in September 1970 entitled *Some information about the earth we all live on*. It was an epoch-making event on various levels as the exhibition marked a growing interest in the issues surrounding consumption, growth and quality of life. The work put into the exhibition from a communication and design perspective was significant



III. 14.3: The NOAH exhibition *Some information about the earth we all live on* presented in the Copenhagen town hall in September 1970. The exhibition was later made into a travelling addition used for educational purposes in Danish schools. The exhibition shows that alternative experts have a strong voice.



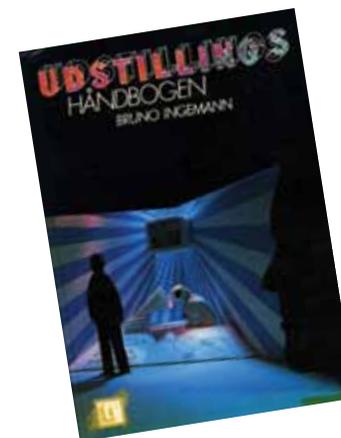
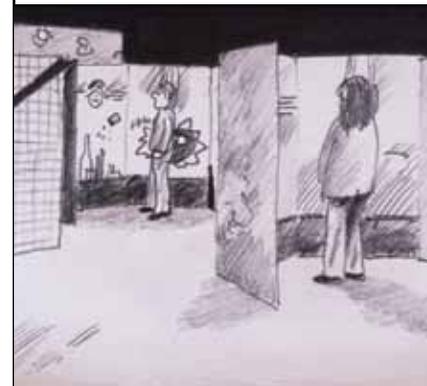


in that it elevated the generally casual, unprofessional design and lack of consideration for communication in grassroots organisations to a higher level. [Ill. 14.3].

The work process behind establishing this exhibition (and the accompanying book) was a learning-in-situation process in which I as the communication and design professional trained experts in other fields to become better writers (in popularising the often difficult content with respect to substance), better visualisers (to consider lexi-visual communication more, i.e. the word/image relation), better storytellers (to find the angle or framework of the story) and better deliverers (keep within deadlines and accept revisions made by the small communication and dissemination group).

My interest in and work with NOAH led me into teaching small courses and supervising other grassroots groups at architecture schools and at universities. The focal point was the transformation of knowledge produced by subject matter experts into communication understandable by lay people. Along with my continuing career as a graphic designer and media artist I became more and more closely associated with communication studies at Roskilde University and expanded and systemised my experiences about exhibitions and ended up writing a book called, *The Exhibition Handbook: About technique, aesthetics and narrative modes* (1986). [Ill. 14.4]

Ill. 14.4: The playful idea created for the book and for discussing various approaches to the development of ideas and design. Illustrations from the book.



Although unfamiliar with Schön's work at the time, this book also follows the learning process between the not so experienced and the experienced. Education, supervision and authoring are one way of getting closer to the fragile creative process. In the dissemination the whole process of producing, an exhibition has to be taken out in the light, exposed and explained.

The most powerful statement in my book is that, "[A]n exhibition is what someone calls an exhibition!" (Ingemann 1986:7). This statement is provoking and offers a starting point in which an exhibition is not a collection of objects but an urgent or critical issue that must be taken into the public sphere and be confronted.

For the book I did a new exhibition about how the media has influenced the daily life of ordinary people from 1900-1960. This theme was introduced to make it possible for the author to enter into dialogue with the various considerations and possible concepts to be rejected, chosen and used. I oscillated between being the person who was experiencing the situation and the person who put it into practice. This is the most important concept for getting in touch with the narrative in an exhibition and how the creative phases are brought into play.

The tone of the book is personal and the language rather informal as is the case, for example in the book's preface (Ingemann 1986:4):

I want to make you more conscious about facing what you really experience when you go to an exhibition. I will try to introduce some terms about what you see and hear so you can be more aware of the media. And the experience.

Not only to sharpen your senses and become more conscious. No, I want something more.

The experience you have as the spectator of others' exhibitions can be used for something. You can also use it when you make an exhibition. It is precisely when you yourself become productive that you seriously look and experience.

The concept of reception/production is rather fruitful regarding supervision and making the designer and author aware of the complexity of the impulses, considerations, emotions and decisions involved in the development of an idea as a mixture of topic, form and whatever resources are available (Ingemann 1986:84). Getting even closer to the invisible design processes must however be possible.

One-in-one: introspection and re-enactment

From 1990-1991 I was in a transition period between being a designer and taking on a new role as a PhD candidate. Although not lost in the transition, I faced a challenging but at times also burdensome and

counterproductive situation in which I oscillated between being a designer and being an academic. In the midst of this fractured existence I was invited to do an exhibition for an organisation called the Technological Board, which had been appointed by the Danish state to raise issues of a problematic or critical nature about society and technology.

Over the course of more than a year while doing the exhibition I developed a loose idea about doing something on the creative design process. Consequently, I gathered every little scratch of paper jotted with notes and made an accurate dairy of my work process. Yet even with a pile of sketches, rough drafts, texts, layouts in multiple versions and the final poster exhibition I still had no idea of how to get closer to the reflection-in-action that took place that I had hoped for.

The challenging but at times trying transition process I went through helped me create a new approach to heightening the level of introspection. This approach meant establishing and maintaining the two roles I had, one as a designer and the other as a researcher and then letting them freely interact with each other. They are one person but two different roles are preformed. And although there are two roles, one person maintains the various modes of the two roles through the resulting dialogue that takes place over time and in writing but not in talk.

This concept on the introspection of the designer/researcher developed slowly over the years, the pace of development hampered by a lack of time as I was occupied with other interesting duties and projects that prevented me from paying attention as a researcher to the more creative mode I still practice.

These duties and projects involved for example participating in doing the re-opening exhibition at the National Museum of Denmark in 1992 and creating a totally new nature centre in northern Denmark in 1998. As a researcher I may not have had time to further develop the introspection concept, but I had also changed roles again. I had thought of myself as a graphic designer for many years, but I was in reality beginning to take on a more open role and was becoming something of a media artist.

A couple of years after the exhibitions were over, I knew that I wanted to write an article about the introspection concept, but I abandoned it again because I was still unable to grasp the important aspects of reflection-in-action and what the most influential factors are.

Confronting the rich amount of material available from the two previously mentioned exhibitions after a long time gap, I feel like a stranger looking at the material and the processes. More than twelve to fourteen years have passed since the processes took place, so talking about myself, the designer and media artist, in the third person instead of the first person is the approach I will take in the next part of my analysis..

Ingemann's true goal is to maintain a distance but to use an intro-

spective method to open up his memories like one would open up a black box. It is the nature of exhibitions to disappear because they are made for a specific site at a specific time, have an 'opening' period of days, months or years and then the exhibition only exists in the form of documents such as texts, photographs and videos. This time the media designer/researcher wanted to get closer to the creative processes and so he constructed a dichotomy of closeness/distance.

It was coincidence that he came across a surprising and powerful way to access hidden emotions and knowledge as a means of creating the desired closeness and level of introspection. Because the exhibitions no longer exist he tried to reconstruct part of one of them by building small-scale models of an exhibition room. He also reconstructed the entire narrative and visual aspects in a slide show about the Shaman and a complicated multi-screen show about the history of drifting sand. He found the original poster for the "Journey" exhibition and he also found the original slides with the images used digital manipulation was possible, thus allowing him to re-enact the process.

Originally believing that he was embarking on a reconstruction process, he realises that he is actually engaging in a re-enactment process. Employing a method that involves re-enactment allows for a different, deeper kind of access to one's memory than images and text documents do. It also comprises physical involvement, participation and immersion. Photo therapist Rose Martin's view of the body as performing supports using a re-enactment approach: "The body must be regarded as a site of social, political, cultural and geographical inscriptions, production or constitution. The body is ... itself a cultural product" (2001).

Performing the re-enactment process by reconstructing the models and the visuals provided numerous clues for retrieving his memories. The re-construction and the re-enactment processes blended together into a new re-creative process. The models and the visuals were re-created as close to the original exhibition as possible. During the re-construction process the material and the goal turned out to have a dual edge in that the material could be used for communicating about the projects and it could be used to go through a re-enactment process comprising physical involvement and participation that automatically involve immersion in the process. Culture theorist Annette Kuhn stresses that, "...memory is an active production of meanings... once voiced... memory is shaped by secondary revision" (2002:161).

The exhibition in progress and research

The activist project about a film, exhibition and event on the former dumping ground called Amager Common, and the Gypsies who temporarily settled there, reflects the activists' enthusiastic involvement in the issues surrounding the Gypsies and their strong commitment to them.

The activists also had a greener approach to filmmaking and the design processes.

The fact that the original exhibition had become part of a museum exhibition underlines the many internal and external circumstances that influence what Ingemann calls "the invisible exhibition design process". The Amager Commons example represents a common way of doing an exhibition, namely by finding and taking objects from various situation, events and sites and placing them in a room and calling it an exhibition.

This is in contrast to the traditional approach that Ingemann calls "research as exhibition" or a transvisual analysis. From the beginning that kind of projects were located at a specific site and the end goal was an exhibition. The design and production methods were used as the creative means for involving reflection-in-action. The binary opposition of closeness/distance became osmotic and introspection and creation became part of the time and site of the project. One of the projects within this framework is presented in Chapter 13, which demonstrates how focusing on the performative from the beginning of a process pushes the invisible processes into becoming more visible by shaping one's memory and by creating what Kuhn describes as a secondary revision.

Chapter 15: Provoked dialogue as reflection-in-action in designing an exhibition

The focus of this article is a case that involves the communication of rather complex content about biotechnology, or more precisely, it is about the development of the design process over the course of more than a year. The client was an organisation called the Technological Board, appointed by the Danish state to raise issues of a problematic or critical nature about society. In this context the purpose was to examine and define what the core issues in the debate on biotechnology are about. These expansive issues were then to be communicated via a small poster exhibition at public libraries.

The process concluded in September 1990 and the subsequent dialogue was written during the following year.³ As luck would have it, time and circumstances coalesced in such a manner that the researcher, who has nearly twenty-five years of practical experience, was at a crossroads that meant the possibility of combining his experience with graphic design practice and the writing of his dissertation at the same time as the making of the exhibition. The case in question was developed in this context, the uncertainty and openness of the situation providing fertile soil for coming up with the idea of gaining insight into the creative process of design. The researcher's aim is to discover how visual ideas are created. How do creative processes unfold? How are knowledge, insight and experiences facilitated beyond rational logic modes of thinking? What effect does the craft process have on creativity? This dialog is interspersed

with narrative reflection from the more detached perspective of writing this chapter.

Chapter 16: The Journey – design between creativity and organization

This chapter looks at the creation of the overall graphic design and the poster for the 1992 opening exhibition, THE JOURNEY, at the National Museum of Denmark from the perspective of the organisation and the designer. On a superficial level the production and approval of the exhibition poster appears to be a simple task, but upon closer scrutiny the process reveals a significant amount about the organisation, the underlying conflicts and the decision-making process. How do things end up going wrong? How can the creative process be so productive? This process is theoretical elucidated through the organizational researcher Edgar Schein's three layers of organisation culture and possibilities of change.

Chapter 17: Journey of the soul – From designer to media artist

The general practice of cultural history museums is to treat original objects as sacred and not alter them in any way when they are exhibited. It is acceptable to construct or insert a context to help understand the meaning and value of the object e.g. by adding a linguistic message to anchor the meaning and interpretation. But how can this precondition be overruled or transformed so the use of the original objects can be displaced and accepted? In this chapter the Shaman Tower as part of the exhibition *The Journey* is analysed and specially the production process of the slideshow for the tower is scrutinized with focus on how original and old crayon-drawings from an Greenlandic artist is allowed to be transformed and interpreted into a new context as it appears in the new re-constructed and re-enacted processes and work of art.

Chapter 18: Drifting sand – the poetic interpretation and the process of construction. The preparation for the unexpected gifts

This chapter is about sand. It is about the story of drifting sand over the course of three hundred years – but it is also about the creative process of sand, drifting sand and the creation of a multi-screen slideshow for a new exhibition. The aim of this chapter is to take stock of the creative process and find innovative ways to address the unexpected gifts arising from meeting resistance to this part of the exhibition's form and content. Crises arose and led to despair, which in turn led to a new framework, creative answers and renewed energy. By re-construction and re-enacting the site and the multi-media show the media-artist got back to the memory of the days of construction and creation for more than ten years

ago and this powerful experience gives insight into the invisible creative design processes.

Notes

- 1 http://www.copenhagen.dk/en/whats_on/current_special_exhibitions/the_population_of_copenhagen/
- 2 The film »Amager Common 1972« was made in the Danish Film Institute's Workshop framework. The film group consisted of Jimmy Andreasen, Niels Arild, Bruno Ingemann and Pia Parby. The exhibition consist of twenty 60 x 70 cm chipboards. Distributed by the Danish Library Association 1973-1974. Jens Frederiksen also became part of the activist group for the exhibition.
- 3 The entire project and the final product were analysed in detail and published in an internal stencil as working papers. The Danish title is: *Grafisk Design – om de kreative processer, strategier og deres resultat, Papirer om faglig formidling*, [Graphic Design: On Creative Processes, Strategies and Their Results] Communication Studies, Roskilde University, 1991.

Chapter 15: Provoked dialogue as reflection-in- action in designing an exhibition

This chapter focuses on the processes of developing the visual and symbolic design of a small poster exhibition by following the design-thinking processes in detail. The fundamental concept is an introverted analysis completed by giving one person two roles, that of designer and researcher. The result is a dialogue concerning the processual experience as a reflection-in-action. This is interspersed with a narrative analysis of this dialogue. This introspective analysis can be seen in the tradition of phenomenology, experimental psychology or semiotic sign theory like Ronald Barthes' work, who, in his autobiography, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes* turned towards himself as a text to be studied.

Developing methods designed to allow extremely close examination of the actual practice can lead to an upgrade of the practice-learned insights to a level where the tacit knowledge is revealed (Polanyi 1967). Consequently, the design research becomes more vivid and more related to the actual practice, in addition to developing approaches for opening the black box of design processes.

Donald A. Schön is studying the processes of design and how those with more experience are using practices to develop experiences to educate the young, less experienced learner, i.e. the novice. His work can be seen as a phenomenological investigation of processes, which are often difficult or impossible to trace and to make explicit (Schön 1982, 1987). Design processes can also be seen as a variety of experiences, narratives and schemata as theorised by British psychologist F.C. Bartlett (1932/1995) and further developed into processual methods in creative reception (Gjedde & Ingemann 2008).

The practitioners fall within this spectrum. Reflection-in-action is the core of Schön's theory. He believes that, "[a]s makers of artefacts, all practitioners are design professionals ..." He stresses that his main case,



Ill. 15.1: The final series of the poster exhibition. Produced to hang in public libraries, the original size of each poster is 100 x 70 cm. The content and headlines of the eight posters are:

architecture, demonstrates that we have access, "... to a prototype of the designer's reflective conversation with his materials; and we can observe it in service both to functional and aesthetic values" (Schön 1987:43).

The concept of design is enveloped by the design process but also by the end product, which is an artefact. Design is much more than a given form that serves the function of an object. In his book, entitled *How Designers Think*, British psychologist and designer Bryan Lawson claims that his book, "... is not about science, art and technology ..." and that "... the designer cannot escape the influences of these three very broad categories of intellectual endeavor" (1988:5). He follows this line of thinking when he cites graphic designer Paul Rand (1970), saying that the "... graphic designer's central task is to find the essential meaning in his material and then to abstract and symbolize" (Lawson 1988:143).

Framework of the biotechnology case

The focus of this article is a case that involves the communication of rather complex content about biotechnology, or more precisely, it is about the development of the design process over the course of more than a year. The client was an organisation called the Technological Board, appointed by the Danish state to raise issues of a problematic or critical nature about society. In this context the purpose was to examine

Genetically engineered sugar beets:
CAN YOU SEE THE DIFFERENCE?

Biorefinery:
OIL, PAPER, AND PLASTIC ARE HARVESTED HERE...

Malaria vaccine:
IF YOU HAVE MONEY, THEN...

Washing powder:
THE EARLY BIRD CATCHES THE WORM...

Rabies vaccine:
LABORATORY GOODBYE

Research:
BIG, SMALL

International competition:
THEY LOST, WE WON

Growth hormone:
READY, STEADY, GO!

and define what the core issues in the debate on biotechnology are about. These expansive issues were then to be communicated via a small poster exhibition at public libraries. The end product comprised posters measuring 100 x 70 cm (Ill 15.1).

The process concluded in September 1990 and the subsequent dialogue was written during the following year.¹ As luck would have it, time and circumstances coalesced in such a manner that the researcher, who has nearly twenty-five years of practical experience, was at a crossroads that meant the possibility of combining his experience with graphic design practice and the writing of his dissertation at the same time as the making of the exhibition. The case in question was developed in this context, the uncertainty and openness of the situation providing fertile soil for coming up with the idea of gaining insight into the creative process of design.

Obviously quite happy with his prototypical case in which the professional architect, Quist, meets his young student, Petra, Arnold D. Schön believes that in the practice of dialogue, "... drawing and talking are parallel ways of designing, and together make up what I will call the *language of designing*" (Schön 1983:60). Schön studies video recordings of dialogue sequences and presents well-founded assumptions about the practical outcome of reflection-in-action as he sees it.

The research concept in this article is different. In this case, the designer and the researcher are the same person and the 'interview' is formatted so that it alternates between the role of the designer and the tacit knowledge he tries to reveal and the interviewer, who in the role as the researcher, questions the designer's answers.

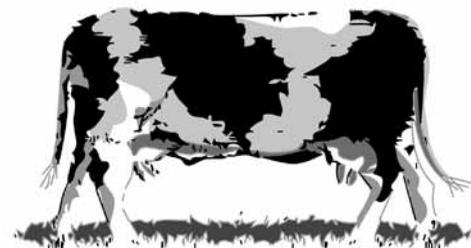
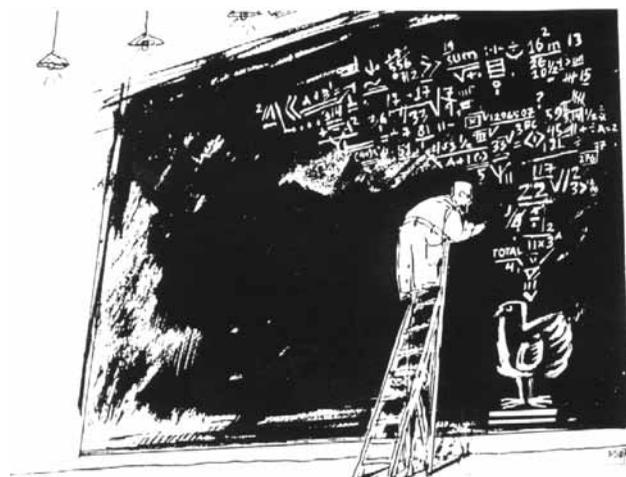
The researcher's aim is to discover how visual ideas are created. How do creative processes occur? How are knowledge, insight and experiences facilitated beyond the rational logic mode? What effect does the craftsman process have on creativity?

The dialogue/interview

[Researcher] - How do you tackle your work? How do you get started?

[Designer] - The most important step a designer will take is the first one. The main issue is to choose a visual and textual style that can be sustained throughout the exhibition. In that phase you're rather vague and tense.

On one hand it's important to make your choice quickly. But on the other hand it's crucial that you choose accurately. That's why I spend a lot of time making small thumbnail sketches to try out various ideas for layouts and for the content and nature of the illustrations, as well as for the type of title to go with them. In this early stage I'm not talking about typography, but about the style of the message expressed by the titles.



- That's pretty vague; can you be more specific about the exhibition we are talking about?

Biotechnology is a rather difficult subject. There are no obvious images associated with it. Well, maybe there are. Various kinds of pictures pop into my head, but they are all scenes of horror. A cow with two heads. Genetically modified humans. Utter fear and loathing. The point of the communicative process is not to create fear, but to establish a basis for issues which are worth discussing, in other words, how we can use biotechnology to serve society and what effects we want it to have on society (Ill. 15.2).

- You say that the first images that sprang into your head were primarily images of horror, so how did you get around those clichés having an influence on you beforehand (Bartlett 1932/1995)?

It's extremely important to free yourself quickly from such obvious and well-known images. I rapidly draw some sketches with those types of images. It's like a stockpile of pictures that prevent you from thinking of new visual expressions. Those pictures prevent me from forming my own exciting, interesting pictures.

Ill. 15.2: The cliché images have to be formulated to get rid of their influence on the Designer.



– But doesn't a designer always have to use and re-use the repository of pictures? Both to be understood by the public, but also because the designer lives in the same visual culture as other observers? What you call new – isn't it just a way of thinking through the same visual ideas and using them in a new and perhaps surprising manner?

You could say that there is a certain amount of recycling. What is new is perhaps the relationship between the picture and the title. When I free myself of the most cliché-ridden pictures, it starts to get hard. Time also plays a role. I need to get a lot of input. So I read all about the subject, but some time has to pass before any visual ideas begin to form. It is important for me to learn about the material I'm going to express. Obviously. After reading broadly in the literature, I found a number of topics that I felt were both interesting and important. In addition, they contained good stories with a potential for exciting visualisation. So right from the start we were thinking about both form and content.

The eight topics

[Researcher] – Why did you choose eight topics? Couldn't many other topics also be of interest?

[Designer] – Because the exhibition was to hang in a library, there were both space and budgetary constraints preventing us from making more. So it was mostly practical issues that determined the number. We couldn't just start up somewhere and work away until there was nothing more to say. We were mounting an exhibition and that meant we had to meet certain requirements regarding simplicity and visual quality.

– That means that from the beginning you were involved in the design of the entire exhibition. Both the text and the presentation? But you have no particular knowledge about biotechnology and in no way are you an expert in that field.

That's true. We worked together with the people on the Technological Board; they were responsible for the scientific content and I was the communications expert. But it didn't mean that the content was written first and then diluted and simplified. The manner of presentation was considered from the start. The content was actually not written before the presentation and titles were ready. Then we began to pour in the content. Being familiar with the stories and which points were to be made by each poster was actually a sufficient basis to create the exhibition in its entirety. The public is quite unprepared upon meeting the exhibition. Initially, the exhibition should function in the same way as a poster. The audience

should be able to catch the message at a fleeting glance. The pictures and titles should clearly tell their stories and engage a potential reader.

– It sounds almost like what you would expect of a good poster: One word. One picture. But it's not quite the same as a poster. There is more information at an exhibition and aren't people supposed to read the entire text?

I was perhaps too glib in saying that the picture and title should be able to tell the whole story. In this case the messages to be presented are more complicated than the ones a normal poster would contain. The idea is also for the audience to read the text or part of it, which is why the layout of the finished exhibition has been specially designed.

Layout and reading – the overall picture is the controlling factor

[Researcher] – Is that something which has been thought through from the start? I mean the final layout that we, the public, see now.

[Designer] – No, it wasn't. During the brainstorming period we worked with a very "boring" and rigid layout in order to put the illustrations, titles and content in place. But while we were doing that, everything became more defined. And when we were almost finished juggling all the elements into position, we could then concentrate on the final layout. It's a matter of only focusing on certain issues at a time. You can't have too many balls in the air at a time. As the work progresses, the issues that you focus on change.

– How do you read a poster? What I mean is, how do you picture the audience reading a poster?

I don't think everyone "reads" a poster in the same way. What I try to do is offer different ways of reading. Some people are very text-oriented and others are better with images. So I try to provide several ways of reading. I choose the most extreme approach, which is image-oriented. During the entire work process, the visual aspect is what obviously catches the eye first.

I assume that the poster is read in the following way:

The first thing you see is its *totality*. You see all the posters at once and get an overview of the range and visual style of the layout, typography and images. Most people can't articulate that this is what they are doing, but when you are a professional you become very aware of how you behave as observer and reader. A professional can also explain his actions in words. The sense of totality is extremely important. At this point the observer

decides whether to spend time on the exhibition or not. If the totality comes across as confusing or hostile or has the wrong »style«, then reading will cease.

– It sounds like you mean that the layout is the most important part of an exhibition and that the content only begins to play a role if the total concept is accepted. But doesn't this put too much importance on the form?

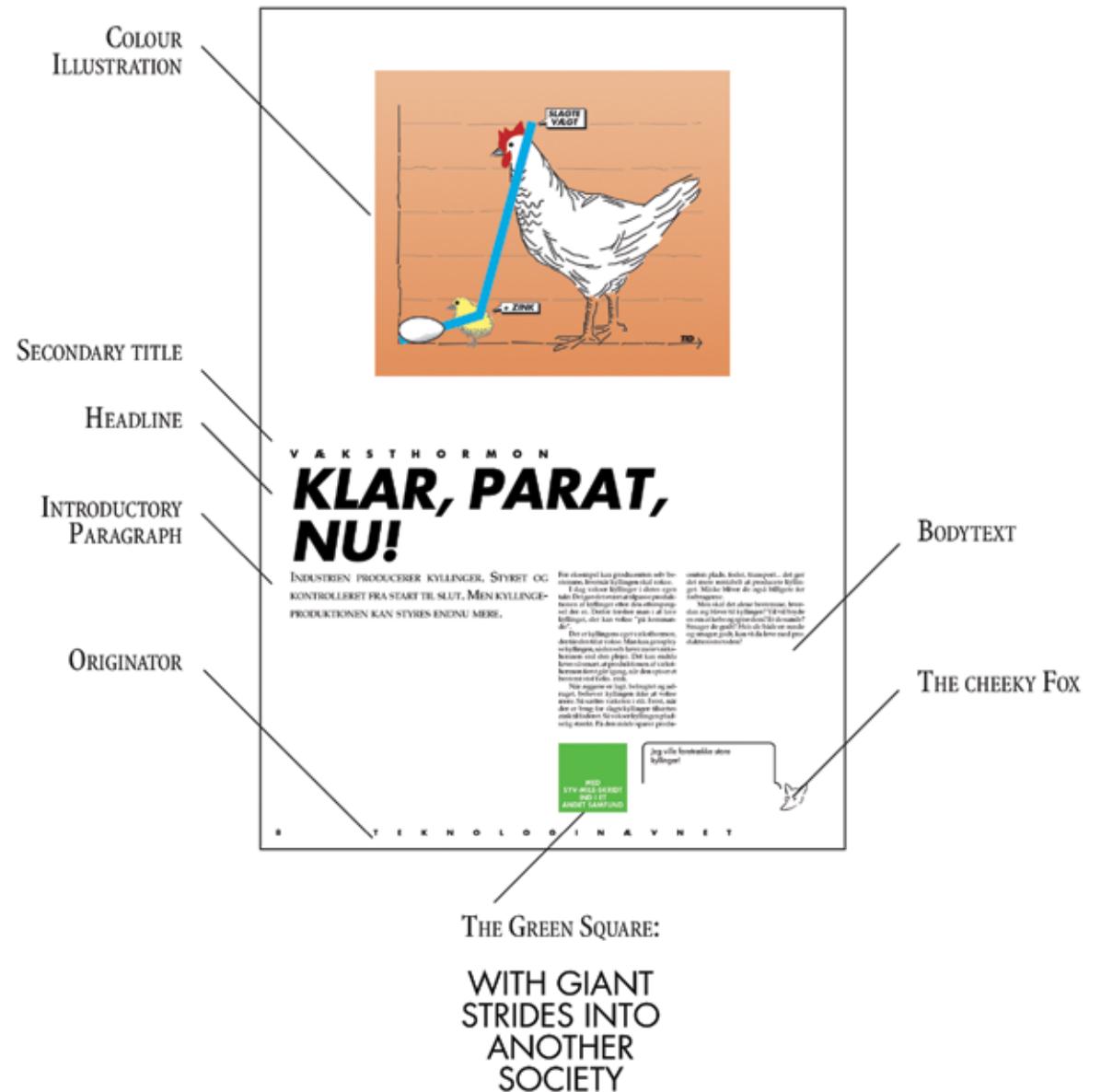
It's really an historical process. About 100-150 years ago it was probably less important. Today it's all about competition. The quantity of information is expanding explosively, and every single utterance is fighting to capture the interest of potential readers. This competition has grown even fiercer because the visual aspect of the media has changed dramatically. You have to send the right signal instantly.

– How can you be sure you are sending the right signal? That the actions you are taking are the right ones?

It's not possible to say that a certain presentation is the only way to do it. Every poster, every exhibition can take many different forms and they can all be "right". But here you have to trust the designer's professionalism and extensive knowledge of what sort of layout and typography is popular just now. It's a question of fashion. A certain type of typography looks modern. Ten years ago it was unusual to use all caps. BUT TODAY IT IS VERY FASHIONABLE. TRENDS AND FASHIONS CHANGE. AND YOU HAVE TO BE SENSITIVE TO THESE CHANGES.

– I think it is unsatisfactory that the total concept depends upon something so fleeting as fashion and professional opinion. It would be more reassuring to perform an analysis and systematically decide upon the basis for the total concept. If one accepts the word of the Designer, it is primarily issues and decisions about craftsmanship that need to be settled. If you want to achieve an understanding of the craftsmanship, you would have to examine examples and learn to analyse the »language« of the totality. I do, however, agree with the Designer that it is a question of style, fashion and function, but it must be possible to make a semi-otic analysis. Every layout is an idiolect and has a *content* and an *expression* (Barthes 1977). It may perhaps be difficult to be very clear about the *expression*, but it must be possible to get beyond intuitive impressions. So in that sense there must be a similarity between the abstract painting and the total concept perceived as a single picture. But let's get back to our discussion about the layout of a poster. How do you think a poster is read? (Ill. 15.3).

The title and picture are seen first. Closely related, the picture and title form



Ill. 15.3: These elements create the specific idiolect of the entire exhibition.

a unity. They are also the most dominant visual elements and fill most of the surface. The **secondary title** which is the small text above the title, will be read at the same time. The eye can then glide down to the second element, which is visually an independent entity, namely *the fox*. There is a small drawing with a brief text that makes a snappy little comment on the content of the picture/title and the body of the text. The eye returns to the **introductory paragraph**, which is right under the title, and if enough interest has been generated in the content, you will read the text. The **text** can be read in several ways. You can read the entire text, or just the end of the text, where there are some short questions dealing with the problems connected to the topic. The text begins with a description of the topic, followed by positive arguments and then negative or questioning arguments. The **Technological Board** as sender of the message is important information that will surely be one of the first things read! Who actually says this? You can see/read parts of the poster and understand them without having to read the entire poster or all the posters.

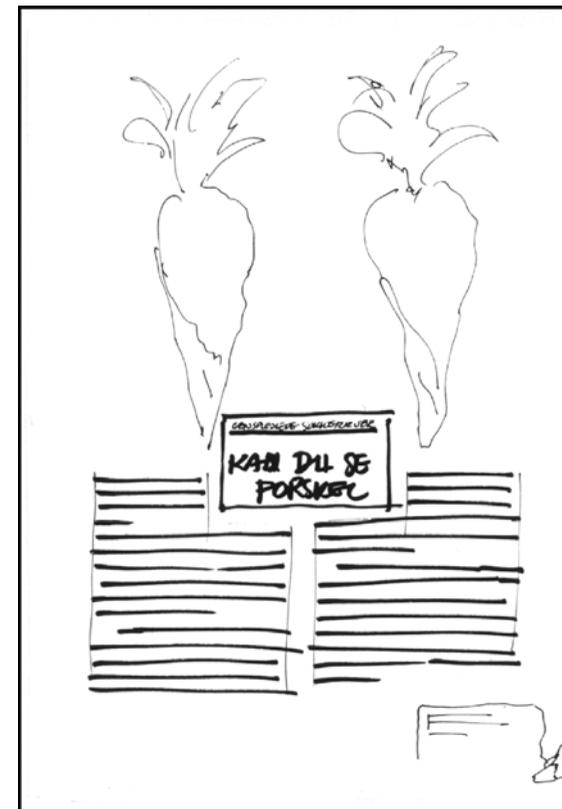
– You seem to imagine a very easygoing form of reading. You apparently think of the readers as people who have to discover on their own what interests them.

I have no illusions that every utterance will be so immensely interesting for all potential viewers that they will read everything. You have to accept that the time a viewer is willing to spend on the posters varies greatly. Some will only “read” the pictures and headlines, some will read all the posters, but most people will do something in between. At least I hope so.

The first important poster – about the sugar beet

[Researcher] – Let’s return to the discussion about how each poster was conceived and try to understand how ideas develop. We can start with the first poster. It deals with genetically modified beets. How was this idea conceived?

[Designer] – This poster was important for several reasons. It was the first one I made, and therefore it was the most difficult. It was more than a question of finding an illustration. Rather, the challenge was to determine what relationship the picture and title should have to one another. The written information explains that it is now possible to genetically modify beets so that when a certain herbicide is used to kill weeds the beets remain unharmed. Drawing a picture of a beet is obvious. But what then? There is no visual difference between beets that are modified and those that are normal. A beet is a beet is a beet. How can you show that the beets survive the herbicide and the weeds die? How do you show that the beets are genetically modified?



Ill. 15.4: Shows the rough draft for the poster on sugar beets first – and second: the final poster. With the text: The first of the eight posters in the series. As the first poster to be visualized by the designer, it set the standard or format for the entire series. The poster’s title reads: Can you see the difference?

I drew some beets just to get started – there’s nothing worse than a blank sheet of white paper, so just putting down some doodles made the paper less fearsome and less virginal. Suddenly, there were many beets on the paper.

Words such as similarity/difference were what got the ideas moving. There were two beets beside each other on the paper, and that was exactly the idea: to show that they were identical. And then when you have two identical beets side by side, you have the picture, but also a whole stockpile of similar pictures: before-after, fat-thin, find-five-faults pictures etc. (Ill. 15.4).

So it was obvious what the title should be:
CAN YOU SEE THE DIFFERENCE?

This challenges the reader to take an extra look at the picture to compare the beets and to determine what the differences are between the two beets; they are of course identical. The text is interactive. It points toward the picture and encourages entering into a dialogue with the picture. In all actuality, the text does not have a clear message when it stands on its

own, making it nearly devoid of meaning. It could be a title for just about anything and contains nothing that indicates what it is about. To guarantee that the title is understood, it was also given a *secondary title: Genetically engineered sugar beets*

It functions as a label that refers to a factual reality. There is no fancy wordplay or references to the picture. Even if we do not read the rest, this ensures that the reader will know what the poster is about.

Let me intersperse some elaboration, considering the dialogue from my perspective as a designer and researcher today. I am aware that the Designer is referring to similar illustrations that are typically found in ads for weight loss drugs, hair growth remedies etc. And when he believes that the title is self-explanatory, it is most certainly because he is working with it not only as an extension of the genre advertisements use, but also an ad style that directly takes advantage of the interplay between text and illustration, not to mention familiar wordplays that nearly have value in and of themselves. The title obviously does not refer to a thing or a situation in the real world, but solely to the illustration. The title is necessary to show what the viewer should be aware of in the illustration – namely the difference between the two beets.

The interaction between the text and the picture does not mean that the text is anchored to the picture but rather that it relays something (Barthes 1977:39-41). The picture supersedes parts of the text in the same way that it does in the cartoon. In this case, the picture explains a crucial aspect of the entire story while the text is of essential importance for providing the drawing with significance. This is an exceptionally successful way of briefly presenting the material. The picture carries the maximum amount of information possible, liberating the text from having to provide the entire message. Combining these two elements ensures fast, effective communication.

Thus, it is no coincidence that the cartoon and the ad apply substitution as the main technique. In this case, the message or joke must be delivered quickly. This also goes well with the Designer's description of what he had in mind, namely that even a fleeting glance from the viewer would be enough to get the message across. People are sceptical and have irrational fears about genetic engineering. This is exactly why it would be a good idea to tap into these irrational fears if the objective is to quickly grab people's attention.

[Designer] – If getting attention was the only factor that needed to be taken into consideration, then this would be a straightforward approach. It would, however, be the equivalent of putting half-naked women on the hood of a car. Attracting attention would be the most significant feature,

but our purpose was greater than that; the aim was to gain attention using something that was central to the message.

If one can demand something from the pictures, then it is similar to what American designer Bob Gill once described. He believed that good visualisation and good ideas can be explained on the telephone. If this is not possible, then the idea is worthless. He does not devalue the aesthetic design, but rather simply points out that if the idea is not clear, then it cannot be saved by the aesthetic design (Gill 1981).

This is also the reason why it is possible to work at the rough draft level, where only the idea is given consideration and not the final design.

[Researcher] – Do you consciously take advantage of the aesthetic and a style that has features in common with ads?

[Designer] – I would say that it's not surprising. This is not something that I have consciously thought about. Maybe this sounds a bit naive, but I've often seen this kind of spill over effect from other types of media. I know that it happens and I don't think that it is problematic. I think that people get inspired and that subconsciously they respond to a variety of influences of this kind. Digging up all of the subconscious factors that are significant in the creative process is difficult.

At this point, time again plays a role. During the process when ideas begin to surface, it is impossible to respond analytically and consciously to each and every form of influence and borrowing that occurs. The chief concern is to concentrate on adequately expressing the subject as well as possible. In this regard, it is the interaction between the creative and analytical levels.

Research on creativity has traditionally divided the creative process into four areas: the preparation phase, the incubation phase, the illumination phase and the verification phase (Kneller 1965, MacKinnon 1976, May 1975)). During the *preparation phase* one becomes aware of the existing problem and begins to identify it. During the *incubation phase* the problem is put aside and presumably forgotten. During the *illumination phase* a crucial idea suddenly comes to the surface: "A light bulb went off in my head". During the *verification phase* the idea is tested, after which, if necessary, it is reformulated or revised. The designer frequently goes back to the issue of time and its role in the process. When he examines the pile of material on the subject, he quickly disregards what he calls cliché pictures, which means he is in the *preparation phase*.

– Can you recognise any of these steps in the creative process?

[Designer] – I know the feeling well of "a light bulb just went off in my head".

This is an aspect that I consciously work with. Over the years I have discovered that I often get good ideas when I ride the train late at night after a long day and am really tired. I also often wake up at night with a crystal clear idea in my head. This has led me to work consciously with subconscious processes. If I have a problem that I can't solve, I sit down and focus my thoughts on it just before I go to bed. I frequently wake up with a new idea, but it doesn't happen every time.

I don't think that I forget the problem; on the contrary, I remind my subconscious of its existence. The tiredness I experience on the train, on the other hand, shows precisely how much I need to let the censorship and limitations of my conscious mind go. I believe that I can work consciously with the *incubation phase* and integrate it with the *illumination phase*.

This is where time plays a big role. If I have project to complete and the pressures of time are heavy, then I don't have time to let this process take place. The result is that the solutions that I come up with are often repetitions of something I have done previously. This is permissible on a professional level. At any rate, it does not surprise me. Even though many people believe that they work best under time pressure, I believe that this is only partially correct.

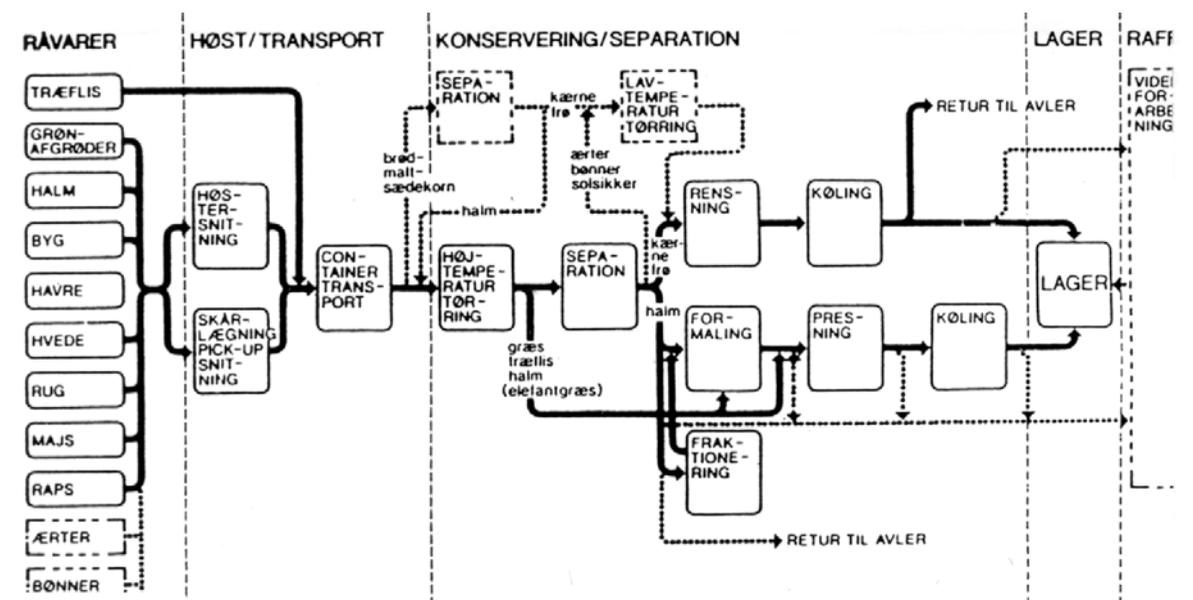
Having to finish something quickly can be a challenge, but the greatest amount of time is spent on the actual idea phase. If I don't have sufficient time, then I seldom come up with something that surprises me. It's a luxury that I would like to give myself. This is where the challenges lie. This is why being in the middle of a variety of projects at the same time is a good idea. When I have a need for the problems to develop on their own, then I can work on something else.

The second poster: Difficult topics such as the complexity of a biorefinery

– The title on the completed poster about the biorefinery reads: OIL, PAPER AND PLASTIC ARE HARVESTED HERE ... The illustration shows a golden brown field of grain with two white shafts of wheat to the left in the foreground. Style-wise it closely matches the interactive aspect of the first poster with the sugar beet. Was that also one of the ones that was self-explanatory?

[Designer] – I thought that two out of eight of the posters were difficult to sort out. One of them was the poster about the biorefinery and the other one was about rabies. The problem with both of them was creating an interactive unit out of the title and the illustration. The first rough draft shows this. The title is *Biorefinery*. This title is perhaps puzzling enough in the first place.

In brief, it is a system for gathering, sorting and processing what biologists



Ill. 15.5: This is only a section of the diagram showing the flow in a biorefinery. Difficult.

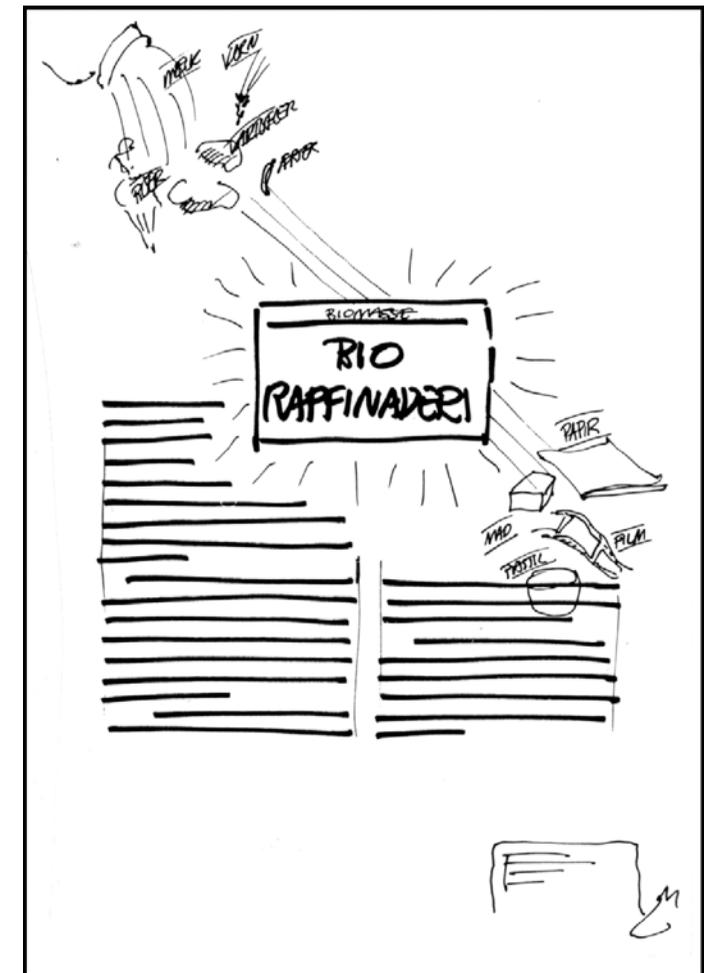
call young biomass: grain, beets, beans, sunflowers, potatoes, wood etc. They contain substances that can be extracted with the help of enzymes and genetically modified bacteria. This is what happens at a biorefinery. These substances can be used to make oil, paper, plastic etc. The first idea I had to dismiss was a flow diagram of the entire process. Although it may have communicated the aspect of planning, it was incomprehensible unless accompanied by a several-page explanation. The issue of technology wasn't actually what I was pursuing. Well, I didn't really truly know what I was looking for (Ill. 15.5). The next idea, which formed the basis of the first draft, was the "black box". On the box it said *Biorefinery*. A multitude of different kinds of biomass, corn, beets, beans, sunflower seeds, wood etc. were being poured from the upper left corner of the poster into the black box and came out of the lower right corner of the black box in the form of food, paper, plastic, film etc. This was perhaps a good illustration of what happens in a biorefinery without being too technical. It was an explanatory, instructional illustration, but the style established in the first poster of the sugar beets was certainly not being adhered to.



Ill. 15.6: The title on the last biorefinery poster reads: Oil, paper and plastic are harvested here ...

[Researcher] – What, then, was the best way to proceed? How did you progress from an understanding of why it didn't work to what is now the final visualisation? Did it just pop up out of the blue?

[Designer] – My reply is pretty much of a yes to that question. I actually tried to analyse the sugar beet poster. It was a familiar product that took on new significance due to the title. In the case of biorefinery, what was new and what was familiar? The new aspect was the products that you can manufacture and the familiar aspect was the corn, beets etc. Although I had



Ill. 15.7: The rough draft shows the thought process of the black-box metaphor.

hit on the surprising aspect, no visual ideas came out of it. When an idea succeeds and has been fully developed then it looks natural and obvious. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said about the process. In this case it is confusion, frustration, irritation and blockage that reign. You go about your daily family life, cook dinner, pick up the kids, talk with family members about their day, read the paper and watch TV, but a recording plays in your head about the confusion you are experiencing while you simultaneously continue to try to find a solution. This is a pain in the neck for everyone around you because you are physically present, but nonetheless absent. At

this stage in the process, time was getting short. Two new ideas had to be generated within the space of a few days. It is especially difficult because you have come up with an idea that you've written down. It's nearly become like a child to you. Doing away with it and moving on is difficult. You become fond of the ideas that you get. Even the ones that aren't very good. Consequently, you create blockage that actually makes it more difficult to move on (Ill. 15.6 & 15.7).

Let me intervene once more, to clarify and expand from my point of view today: The Designer has to get rid of the clichéd illustration he has had from the beginning. Although it is a liberating process that sets the creative processes free, the opposite is true when he expresses his own ideas on paper.

He makes the comparison to having to do away with a child. It is falling in love and a birth. It can also be looked at as being lazy. Creating something new is terribly exciting, but it also means experiencing fear and pain. Apart from perhaps just being fun and exciting, it is also demanding, stressful and ambitious.

– Do you have ambivalent feelings? Would you like to do something that is good from both your point of view and the consumer's on the one hand and yet also experience dread at the thought that you might not be able to do it on the other?

[Designer] – Well, I wouldn't quite use a word like 'dread'. I would say that when I started doing this kind of work many years ago, I most likely had a feeling of dread associated with the notion that I wasn't good enough or that I couldn't manage. To a large degree, it was a feeling that was connected to other people's appraisal. Today, it is more my own assessment and norms that I battle with. My ambitions are probably the issue. I know what I am capable of – but that is not always possible. I've become more humble and accepting. I'm not a world champion, but I'm good enough. Regardless, one solution blocks another. This is why the first solution has to be done away with for new ideas to arise. I have to forget what I have done and try to begin again.

– How can you actively forget? Is it possible to wipe the slate clean?

I wipe the slate clean and start over from the beginning with a fresh piece of paper. This gives me a very empty feeling, which is how it is supposed to be. It's not pleasant and it requires overcoming any reluctance. I began with the text. This is the area where I had spent the least amount of energy until now. How could I create a text that would invite initiating a dialogue

with an illustration that I had not yet come up with? This was the weakest point and the easiest place to start.

In retrospect, it is easy to see that I made the first rough draft in one sentence: Harvesting film, petrol and paper is possible ... Just as it is possible to drill for oil. Using a shortcut where some processes are skipped, you end up with the product of biotechnical processes. This is typical for developing ideas: one comes up with something by grouping what is impossible and illogical. The entire biorefinery process ought to have read: You harvest grain, beets, beans, sunflowers, potatoes and wood ... which can be turned into oil, paper and plastic ... This is the one that I wrote and then combined in a new way:

Biorefinery

OIL, PAPER AND PLASTIC ARE HARVESTED HERE ...

The illustration was obvious. It should be an ordinary, easily identifiable field in Denmark planted with a familiar crop. In this case, I think that a field of grain was an obvious choice – what could be more Danish or more familiar?

To give some further details from my perspective today, the Designer (in me) at the time thought that it was difficult to wipe the slate clean, so he chose to concentrate on the weakest link, namely the title, and then to completely forget the illustration for a while. This is where he has invested the least amount of life blood and creative work. At the same time, it is clear that without the work that went into the first instructional illustration and the resulting understanding, it would have been impossible to come up with the final title. Even though he claims to have wiped the slate clean, he has not actually done so. To a great extent, he uses his previous experience in a highly active way.

Instead of wiping the slate clean, he pushes his experiences down into his subconscious and calls them forth again as if by magic. But it is a well-planned stroke of magic. This is evident from his statement about beginning with the weakest point. He is highly aware of what he has to do even though it occurs subconsciously. When he believes that the illustration was obvious, it is solely due to the fact that it was available as a possible option while work with creating a title was going on.

He had the picture in his head and was puzzled about the connection between ordinary fields and oil, paper, plastic etc. This puzzlement was tied up with focusing on explaining the tenets of a biorefinery in an instructional way. The Designer clearly shows a desire to be educational. This is an offshoot of his extensive experience with precisely this type of communication. He has fallen into a pit that he has dug himself.

He has thorough knowledge about instructional illustrations. This

leads to the short circuiting that he finds so difficult to get away from and that he spends a long time describing. Believing that it happened is difficult. Surely his observations are correct on a more general level, but in the specific situation, his explanations are insufficient.

Foxes – rabies – and the cheeky fox

– On the first rough draft you showed me, there was a title that read *DEATH HAS A CAUSE* and then there were a bunch of animals that you said were foxes. Why didn't this idea get used?

[Designer] – A part of that idea was used, but it was a by-product and not anything that was thought of from the start. The fox. When you write something that is controversial, you have to be very precise and factual. It is not possible to put your feelings and opinions directly into the text. The text of course contains opinions, but only indirectly. While doing the work, I felt there was a need for a breathing hole, a vent, a spot where it was possible to be cheeky.

The only item that survived this poster was the fox. The little fox can whisper in your ear with comments that cannot be incorporated in the actual text. I ended up using a fox head with a speech bubble that contains thoughts a viewer might have. This is not a new idea either; it was surely inspired by the angles and devils in an annual satirical magazine called *The Octopus* and by the child who exclaims “But he has nothing on” in *The Emperor's New Clothes* (Ill. 15.8 & 15.9).

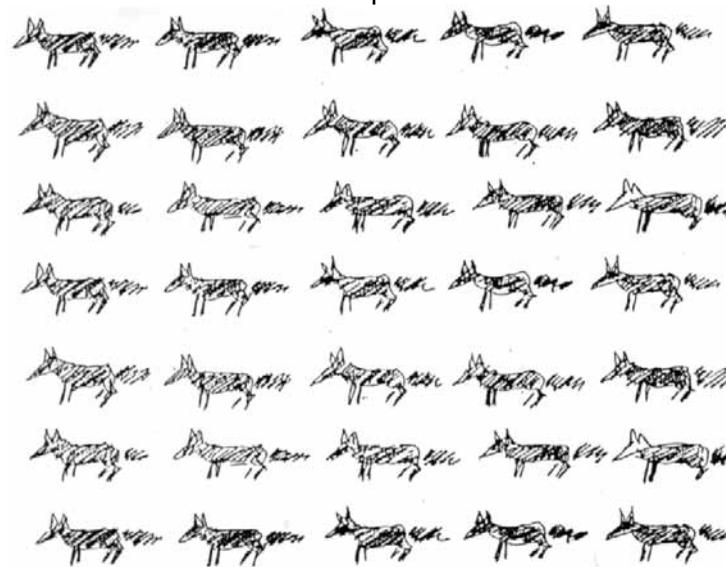
On the sugar beet poster the fox says: *Why does agriculture need to produce more?*

On the biorefinery poster the fox says: *Why can't you share the food with the poor instead?*

The fox appeared during the process because it pushed its way in. It simply wanted to be included; it wanted to be on the posters. After it had become an idea, it was quite easy to convincingly explain the importance of its role. The reason it actually developed was because the first draft with multiple foxes didn't work.

The Designer talks with relief about a breathing hole, a vent, a place to be cheeky – and he also talks indirectly about a national organisation and communicates about a controversial topic. It has perhaps not been quite as free as he describes?

The next section will continue to reflect on these reflections-in-action enabled within the force-field of this dialogue between the designer and the researcher, which was created directly after the exhibition. By adding another, more analytical level of reflection some conclusions become possible that take us back to relating design research to actual practice.



Ill. 15.8 & 9: A visual concept designed to be the main illustration of one poster ends up being a single cheeky fox that provides commentary on each of the eight posters.

Why can't you share the food with the poor instead?



Back to the practitioner

Familiar with the constraints and ‘value traps’, the Designer tries actively not only to overcome them but also to build upon and create constraints (Pirsig 1974:302). The Designer actively determines the constraints for his work as a tool to induce new ideas. He invents ‘points-of-attention’ and tries to identify where the ‘soft spots’ in the design process are. In addition, he works vigorously, nearly to the point of exhaustion, to find information and visual inspiration from the popular culture and the field of science to expand his repertoire of expression.

Interested in finding out how visual ideas are created, the Researcher poses the questions: How do creative processes occur? How are knowledge, insight and experiences facilitated beyond the rational logical mode? What effect does the craftsman process have on creativity? More than just the Researcher, however, has recognised that the design process contributes to the creation of knowledge through the production process of communication – so has the Designer.

When Schön analyses his superb prototypical example from the studio, he demonstrates his understanding of many interesting aspects of the case. When Schön notes, “... Quist reflects very little on his own reflection-in-action, and it would be easy for a student or observer to miss the fundamental structure of inquiry which underlies his virtuoso performance” (Schön 1983:104), he points out a serious problem, namely, who is it that performs the reflection-in-action, and who gains insight from this process.

The analytical, self-reflective move of putting one person into the roles of both *designer* and *researcher* was created without knowledge of Schön's study at the time of the analysis. In this approach, the insight

gained makes the tacit knowledge and the practical action visible and useful for the designer. It can also be viewed as an answer to the issue Schön brings up in the following, “We know very little about the ways in which individuals develop the feel for media, language, and repertoire which shapes their reflection-in-action. This is [an] intriguing and promising topic for future research” (Schön 1983:272).

Without actually undertaking an in-depth analysis, dialogic interviews obviously reveal some sort of design constraints. Bryan Lawson divides these constraints into internally and externally related domains such as the designer, the client, the user and the legislator. When describing the design generator model he created, he explains, “... this model is not intended to form part of a design method but rather as an aid to the understanding of the nature of design problems ...” (Lawson 1988:79).

In order to follow the design process and reflectivity beyond the academic level, Schön’s observation about reflective research provides guidance: “Reflective research requires a partnership of the practitioner-researchers and the researcher-practitioners” (Schön 1983:323).

In another context, how users of a variety of cultural products create meaning and experiences has also been of interest. In this case, the aim has been to develop methodologies that are able to examine so-called person-in-situation experiences. Users and informants exhibit highly creative actions, but what occurs cannot be described as design processes. The methodologies used can easily be creatively addressed. Studying person-in-situation experiences requires the use of video technology, for instance, a video cap² or a ReflexivityLab. Simply creating mountains of data with the technology is not sufficient, which is why the methodology comprises three types of dialogue, e.g. during the design process: the *process dialogue*, the *work dialogue* and the *reflection dialogue*. This opens up additional avenues to the introspective dialogue presented here. One of the main advantages of using three types of dialogue is that the action-present is stopped and interrupted regularly, thus allowing the informant be part of and learning from the reflection-in-action (Gjedde & Ingemann 2008:173-176). The practitioner can be provoked to reflect on his or her own practices and the researcher can theorise about the uncertainties and chaotic or unique aspects of the situation in question.

Notes

- 1 The entire project and the final product were analysed in detail and published in an internal stencil as working papers. The Danish title is: *Grafisk Design – om de creative processer, strategier og deres resultat, Papirer om faglig formidling*, [Graphic Design: On Creative Processes, Strategies and Their Results] Communication Studies, Roskilde University, 1991.
- 2 See for example the video-cap presented in Gjedde & Ingemann (2008) p. 76. And technological development in:
http://akira.ruc.dk/~bruno/Processual/researchingexperiences_x.html

Chapter 16: THE JOURNEY – Design between creativity and organisation

This chapter looks at the creation of the overall graphic design and the poster for the 1992 opening exhibition, THE JOURNEY, at the National Museum of Denmark from the perspective of the organisation and the designer. On a superficial level the production and approval of the exhibition poster appears to be a simple task, but upon closer scrutiny the process reveals a significant amount about the organisation, the underlying conflicts and the decision-making process. How do things end up going wrong? How can the creative process be so productive?

There are six weeks and counting before the opening of the newly renovated National Museum. The old buildings that housed the museum for decades have been closed for more than three years to carry out a seventy million dollar renovation project. Formerly open courtyards are now covered with glass and the museum’s square footage has increased by 6000 m². The new area for special exhibitions will be put in use for the first time, the initial exhibition setting the standard for all subsequent exhibitions.

After two years of preparation, THE JOURNEY is finally going to open. Numerous problematic discussions and proposals concerning the museum’s ambitions surfaced during this time that the designer only became familiar with, but which he was not involved in, when his work on the poster commenced only slightly more than two months prior to the opening.

At one point, a crucial meeting takes place between the designer and the head of the communications department. The poster is ready for presentation for a final round of decisions and minor corrections one week before going to print. In the designer’s notebook (my notebook), there is a letter drafted to the head of the department in an aggressive blue ballpoint pen that states:

I'm furious. Never in my 25 years professional life have I encountered something like this. You call for a meeting – and then leave! I think this is insolent.

I arrive expecting to present my ideas and goals and to subsequently receive specific critique from you at which point we reach a conclusion together.

But you left.

I had hoped that you would describe the problem, but instead I'm left with a feeling of uncertainty and have to interpret your vague response and try to resolve it ...

The designer has also added the following comment, "She walked all over me. Walked. I'm ready to pitch it all". The designer's notebook indicates that four days later a new meeting was set up with more people attending. The issue has become a conflict between two proposals: The designer's proposed poster, which has been fully supported by the entire team actually working on the exhibition, and a new one presented by the head of the communications department that was made by a leading Danish artist.

One day later the designer notes, "... Only one poster is left and it's mine. This one poster represents the immense potential for change, carrying with it the new elements that are to come". The designer does not feel especially good about pressuring the head of the department because, "It's a fait accompli. You have to approve the poster or there won't be one, but this is a situation that I'm not responsible for. The work should have been started months ago".

The designer discovers two important issues. One, the poster has become a metonym for all the new and necessary initiatives related to the field of museology and visitors. It also involves how the image of the 'new' National Museum is going to be constructed and presented to the public and to museum donors. The second issue is related to the decision structure, hierarchy and use of power within the organisation. A strong hierarchical structure means everyone focuses on the person above them and has to play it safe to avoid problems and unpopularity. One common power play is using time constraints to force decisions in an environment of mistrust.

Briefly, the first issue involves the organisational power that governs and influences the creative process. The second issue is creativity as supported by restraints, solicitude and trust.

THE JOURNEY exhibition

Three months prior to the exhibition the head architect of the exhibition contacted the designer (me). The head architect's firm special-

ises in designing exhibitions and generally hires subcontractors expert in lightning, sound, showcases, signs, slideshows and graphic design. Less than three months prior to the grand opening, I was hired as an expert in graphic design and slideshows. My primary task was to create the overall graphic style for the pamphlets, school materials, tickets and signs as well as the banners and posters for presenting the new museum to the public. My second task, in conjunction with an external ethnographer, was to produce a slideshow about how Eskimo shamans travel into the realm of the spirits.

Although I had known the architect for many years, we had never worked together on a project. In 1991, however she came across a quite technical, practical review I had written of Photoshop in 1990 in the Danish version of *Macworld*. In the article I thoroughly explained how to make images by combining elements from different pictures and how to adjust the colour and mood by modifying the visuals. The five pictures in the review, though far from naturalistic, were highly expressive and put together like a montage. These pictures are what inspired her to contact me about the National Museum exhibition.

When the architect and I met to discuss the project, we discovered that we were on the same wavelength and hit it off immediately. Our meeting took place at the small flat used for preparing the opening exhibition which contained a white cardboard model of the opening exhibition and the room where it would take place. The architect filled all this whiteness with words, describing the light, darkness, shadows and special mood they intended to communicate revolving around the idea of paradise. I received a printed presentation of their approach to the exhibition, which stated:

Human beings have always travelled, if not physically then mentally through legends and myths. Throughout history traces are found of travellers, their routes, actions and stories. To depict this widespread concept that covers many aspects of human existence, the exhibition crosses traditional chronological and geographical boundaries. The concept of a journey is interpreted so widely that the exhibition deals with both the concrete, physical journey (by land, sea and air) and the more intangible, metaphorical journey through time, our imaginations and dreams.

... To journey is to move, experience and sense, and in keeping with this the exhibition, stress is put on the creation of moods and images that can frame the individual themes in the exhibition.

... The exhibition makes a departure from the original museum objects and involves all of the collections in the museum. It will contain a huge amount of multi-faceted objects from the National Museum.

The architects' oral presentation focused on one issue: the poster that was going to present the whole exhibition to the public. Their heavy emphasis on the visual aspects of the poster piqued my curiosity. There was some playfulness in their talk. They had just ordered a dozen tropical trees, 20-meter palms and flowers for the Garden of Paradise section of the exhibition that were on their way from Amsterdam to be put on display in a few weeks. This was one of the core elements: placing living trees in a cultural history exhibition, a step that was quite provoking for the archaeologists, the ethnographic experts and the conservators, who were anxious about how to deal with the humidity and the organisms that would be imported with the trees and that might possibly harm the museum objects. I could hear their imaginations whirling in their presentation, which also contained strong religious connotations, touching on light and shadow, calmness and rest.

The second core element involved a discussion about the wall at the end of the room, where a variety of boats would, as opposed to resting on the floor, hang floating in the air to symbolise "the last journey". A key person in this respect was the lighting man, a specialist who normally works at theatres. His task was to create flickering light on the walls and ceiling of the room. He used small spots to project light down on the floor, where he had placed numerous small salvers filled with water and small mirrors. Equipped with electric motors, the salvers moved, creating a delightful sparkling pattern of light. Our conversation closed sprinkled with phrases and words such as: trickling water, fertility, rest, harmony, looking through something, surprises, the emergence of light and shadow, sound and reflections in the water.

Now, time to make a poster!

The open-minded co-creator

These impressions and indications about what mood to create made the designer feel somewhat lost and insecure but also terribly inspired and provoked into find new ways of working. Two weeks later he met with both the architectural practice and the project head of the National Museum's exhibition for the first time.

The designer was to present the two areas he had been working on. One involved the overall design of the catalogue, signs and tickets as well as the logotype for branding the whole exhibition. The solution the designer came up with is the one the exhibition used. The second area was the poster. Instead of relying on a traditional visual sketch or detailed draft of a poster, he presented – more inspiring words. He explained that he would like to produce a variety of backdrop images representing four or five exhibition themes that could be integrated into the background as minor images.

His idea was to collect images at the University of Copenhagen Bo-

III. 16.1: The first visual representation of the poster comprised only one word, the title of the exhibition in official font. The one Danish expression for THE JOURNEY is REJSEN.

tanical Garden, which has beautiful round greenhouses filled with various huge palms and assorted tropical trees. His plan was to take ten rolls of film in unusual ways with his Nikon camera. For example, he would swing his camera over his head by its strap and shoot a photo using the self-timer.

Another idea was to accompany the curators into the museum's basement, which housed an endless number of storage rooms filled with thousands upon thousands of objects and ask them to pick out what they saw as some of the most outstanding objects, after which he would take photos from his point of view to capture useful visuals and objects with a powerful attraction.

He had no poster to present at this meeting. No visual sketches. No concrete visual content, just a work in progress that amounted to no more than the title of the exhibition, THE JOURNEY, in the logotype used for the catalogue, signs and tickets (Ill. 16.1).

A mood of openness, appreciation and eagerness reigned at the meeting. Everyone was interested in developing and expanding the designer's proposals, bringing up suggestions about which storage rooms to visit and who should get to point out what might be of value from a communication perspective and not just a museal perspective.

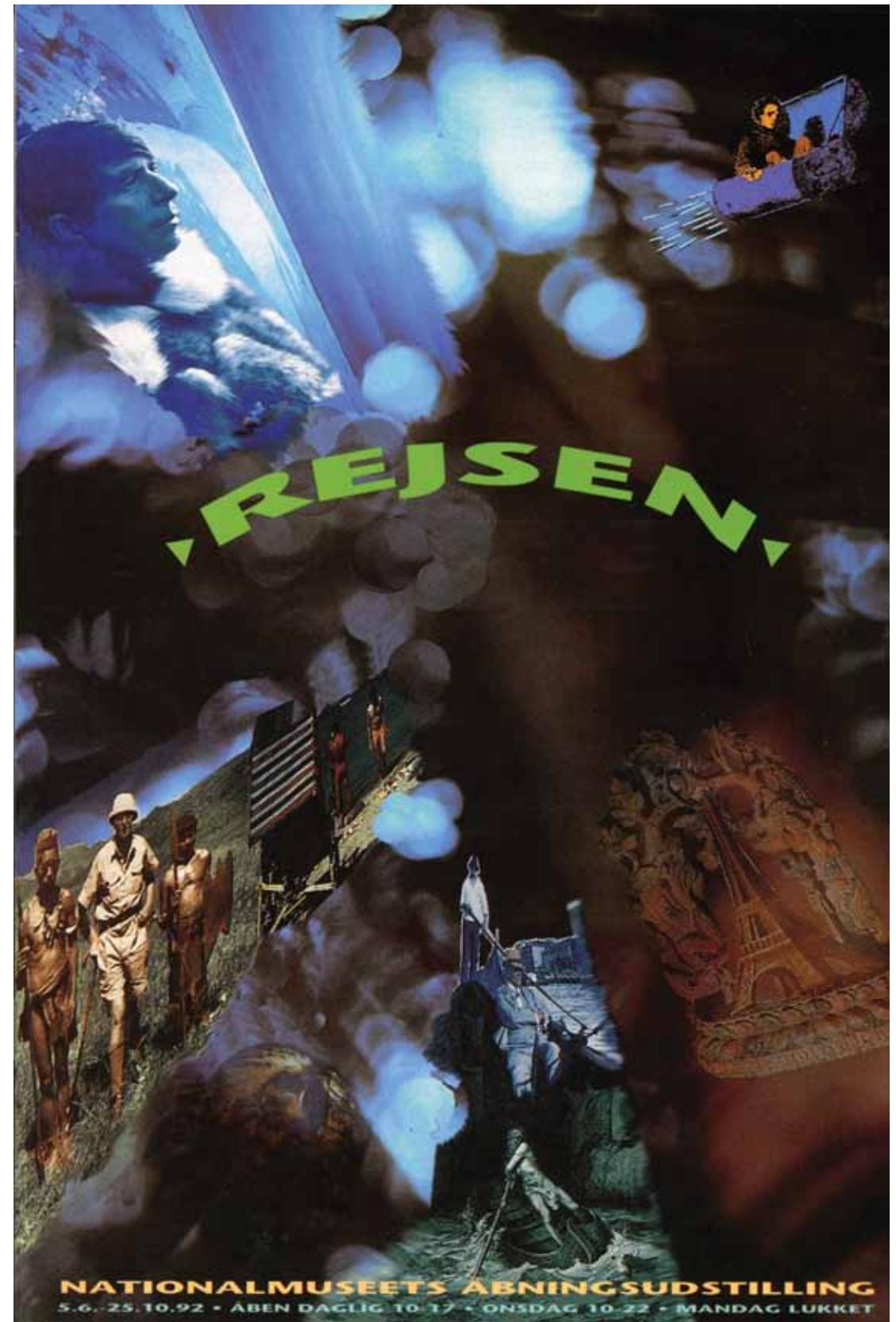
Working in the dark

Exploring the treasure trove of objects in the basement was a semi-otic act performed much in the spirit of Sherlock Holmes. The designer was on a hunt for significant clues not defined beforehand or selected based on clearly formulated goals, but ones that were to reveal themselves through observation, for example by photographing an object of interest on a stand or with extra lighting. Working like this, i.e. being open and staying open for as long as possible, is the ideal creative process.

With ever-present time constraints, remaining continually open is not possible in the real world. The scheduling meant only ten days were available before a semi-final version of the poster had to be presented. Ten days to photograph, get the colour film developed, mounted in slide frames, selected, scanned and transformed into digital images and then imported into Photoshop, adjusted, sized, manipulated, diffused, rotated and placed in many layers on a digital canvas. In between all of this, there had to be time for the creative development of the ideas. Combined with the various other logistical issues and plans, this meant working in a less open, more defined search process in which the level of openness was ruled to some degree by decisions that had to be made.

The museum also had a multitude of ideas to fit under the umbrella concept of the THE JOURNEY, including: departure, arrival, the Garden of Eden, the landscape of the journey, the equipment for the Journey, the means of transportation, the result of the journey, the spiritual journey

Ill. 16.2: The final poster for THE JOURNEY (REJSEN) exhibition.



and the last journey. In the creative process it is necessary to reduce and synthesise, so the designer reluctantly chose some of these frameworks when he began exploring the treasures in the museum's basement.

The final version of the poster clearly shows that the designer chose to work with the concept of oppositions (Ill. 16.2). The images contrasted on the poster are:

- An old Indian souvenir vs. a modern French souvenir of the Eiffel Tower.
- A 1930's white explorer wearing a topee standing between scantily clad native Africans with spears vs. a modern-day white male tourist on the beach at Ibiza.
- A photograph of Danish author George Brandes sailing in a gondola in Venice vs. Gustave Doré's 1867 illustration of Dante's *Inferno* showing the Arrival of Charon on the River Styx, where newly departed souls are carried to the other side.
- A photograph of Danish polar explorer Knud Rasmussen vs. a well-known drawing from H. C. Andersen's 1850's story *The Flying Trunk*.

In the preliminary critique session of the designer's oral presentation, the designer stressed the importance of going into all of the storage rooms to seek inspiration, but the final poster only contains three objects, four old photographs and drawings and some other pictures, such as one of his own tourist snapshots and a Doré xylography. His sampling technique develops small narratives by placing paired, oppositional visuals close to each other to make them work dialogically. In the overall composition of the poster these paired narratives had to blend in while still existing as clear, coherent units.

For the background of the poster he has chosen a slide from among the more than three hundred taken randomly at the Botanical Gardens by e.g. swinging his Nikon camera around his head. He sees this slide as the final picture, but when he chose it, he did not know exactly which pictures he was going to insert and blend together.

The composition of the Botanical Garden slide has diagonal lines leading from the bottom corners upwards (Ill 16.3), guiding the eye until it is stopped by an explosion of light moving in different directions like fireworks. The dominant element in the composition is the light, which is enhanced by a dark blur of green and light brown in the lower right corner. Somewhat abstract, the picture condenses the concept of light and trees by capturing what the play of light looks like from the ground when the wind ruffles the leaves and branches of a tree.

The designer has succeeded with his concept of randomness. He has deliberately chosen to use film with a slow ASA, a small aperture (B:16) and hence a long exposure time. The entire effect was then enhanced by

Ill. 16.3: The backdrop picture selected from among more than three hundred slides taken at the University of Copenhagen Botanic Garden.



setting the lens on one meter and swinging the camera around. Ostensibly a picture of a palm tree in the Botanic Garden, the true motif is the light and the mood and images brought up at the first meeting with the architects: trickling water, fertility, rest, harmony, looking through something, surprises, the emergence of light and shadow, sound and reflections in the water.

To be seen

In this creative ambiance everyone is supportive and interested in getting the best result from the process. Nobody really knows where it all will end, but trust is a necessary condition for the process to succeed. After ten days of making slides, selecting them, digitising them and drafting them into a coherent image, he and the initiator of the whole project, the architect, both have a shared need to meet and jointly look at the physical product to see if the visual presentation successfully matched the architects' enthusiastic oral presentation a month earlier.

The architects came to the designer's small studio, where they initially discussed the various logistical problems with the exhibition and then the creative process of making the poster, not so much as just a poster but as a symbol for the general expression of the exhibition's entire concept. Some of the archaeologists and ethnographic experts made critical comments about the idea that the designer found annoying.

Due to a lack of time, the poster was presented on a computer screen and not as a colour print.¹ The head architect was shown an image in process and the title of the exhibition was not on the poster. Only a draft of some of the various small narratives was on the backdrop, while the others were still unaltered pictures, some of them still unscanned. The main idea however was clear and the designer could easily orally describe what remained to be done.

The architect was exited! This was exactly what she had hoped for! When she presented the exhibition and the poster five years later at a conference at Roskilde University, Denmark, in March 1997 on creativity in research and dissemination, she was overwhelmingly enthusiastic about the whole process in which the poster, in her opinion, represented the concept that had governed the production of the entire exhibition. She believed that the designer's highly creative understanding made it possible to capture the mood and atmosphere of the exhibition so precisely and in such a well-founded manner.

If the whole creative process was so innovative and successful and the final poster so precisely expressed the concept of the exhibition, then why did it go terribly wrong in the final decision-making process?

Together in the organisation

This chapter started with a description of how a meeting ended in chaos. Although aware of clues about the hierarchy and organisational challenges at the museum, the designer was too busily immersed in the actual work process to take much notice of that part of the process. He was also protected from it in many ways. His close collaborators were the architects and especially the head of the architectural practice but also the museum's appointed project manager, who was responsible for coordinating the content of the exhibition and handling the objects in cooperation with the museum's curators. This worked well on a day-to-day basis, but the designer met with some resistance from the archaeologists and the ethnographic experts.

After three years of rebuilding, the museum expected the reopening to focus on the visitors' experience and on giving them something unexpected, something different from daily life. This approach is reflected in the words of an eight-page article in a large Danish newspaper in which the Danish National Museum states, "Welcome to a new, quite active cultural centre", where expectations are met and individuals can independently manage their museum visit at the level of their choice".² This article is actually breaking news because the existing paradigm of the museum's organisational culture previously focused on objects and the research on their provenience and chronology and not on dissemination and communication. The paradigm has shifted from the objects to the experience of the visitors.

This kind of change in an organisation will inevitably influence daily work, and when the decision has been made to undergo such an extreme transformation, members of the organisation may experience uncertainty and unresolved anxiety. One of the most well known organisational culture theorists, Edgar H. Schein, defines organisational culture as:

A pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems (1992:17).

Schein writes that culture formation is always, by definition, a striving towards patterning and integration, even though in many groups their actual history prevents them from ever achieving a clear-cut, unambiguous paradigm. Schein believes that culture can be analysed on several different levels, where the term 'level' means the degree to which the cultural phenomenon is visible to the observer. He proposes three layers: artefacts, espoused values and assumptions.

At the surface **artefacts** comprise any phenomena that one sees,

hears and feels when one encounters a new group with an unfamiliar culture (1998:25). Artefacts can be recognised by people who are not part of the culture, some examples of which are dress codes, furniture, art, work climate, stories, work processes and organisational structures. The outsider might easily see these artefacts, but might not be able to fully understand why these artefacts have been established. To understand this, outsiders can look at the espoused values in the culture.

Espoused values are the ones normally promoted by the most prominent figures of a culture. Espoused values could be represented by e.g. the philosophies, strategies and goals that for instance managers seek to realise. However, the values leaders seek to realise must be supported by some general, shared assumptions about how e.g. a museum should be run or how employees should be managed. If the espoused values are not in line with the general assumptions of the culture, this might signal trouble.

Assumptions reflect the shared values within the specific culture. These values are frequently ill-defined and will oftentimes not be especially visible to the members of the culture. Assumptions and espoused values are possibly not correlated and the espoused values may not be at all rooted in the actual values of the culture. The differences between espoused and actual values may create frustrations, a lack of morale and inefficiency in an organisation. Schein writes:

Basic assumptions, like theories-in-use, tend to be nonconfrontable and nondebateable, and hence are extremely difficult to change. To learn something new in this realm requires us to resurrect, reexamine and possibly change some of the more stable portions of our cognitive structure ... Such learning is intrinsically difficult because the reexamination of basic assumptions temporarily destabilizes our cognitive and interpersonal world, releasing large quantities of basic anxiety (1998:31).

Thus according to Schein there are two keys to successful cultural change: (1) the management of large amounts of anxiety that accompany any relearning at this level; and (2) the assessment of whether the genetic potential for the new learning is present (1998:32).

Keeping Schein's theories in mind makes it possible to comprehend why the meeting was so chaotic, bringing about an understanding of what happened and why, as well as an understanding of who benefited from the intervention of the designer with his poster. The poster became the prototype of the exhibition and the new trends to be exposed, valued and approved. The museum's marketing states that visitors should have, "... an *experience* – something unexpected, something different from daily life".

From the beginning one of the striking aspects of this exhibition was to make the experience of the objects, ambiance and moods open to interpretation by leaving out the traditional textual anchorage. Seen from a semiotic perspective, the visual (and physical objects) can either be anchored by the accompanying text so that the linguistic elements serve to anchor (or constrain) the preferred analysis. Or the image/text relationships can be complementary in a way that Roland Barthes calls *relay*, which focuses on the importance of intertextuality (1977, 38ff). Intertextuality is more than the relationship between image and text; it is also the relationship and the narrative constructed by placing one object in relation to another. It is broader than the actual sequence of objects in the design.

From a semiotic theory standpoint, the producers of the exhibition decided to use a select few keywords to anchor a cluster of objects and design into one rather open, stimulating experience inviting visitors to enter into a new area and to use their own knowledge and own experiences during their visit. The idea was for visitors to construct their own journey. As a result, the amount of textual content in the entire exhibition was minimal.

What was the outcome? From the moment the exhibition was installed the curators recognised what was happening. And they were furious. In their minds every single object had to have an accompanying text explaining what the visitor was looking at. A struggle commenced almost immediately, the conflict producing many losers. The curators won, which meant that the silkscreen printers had to work overtime to print text after text on the numerous glass showcases in the entire exhibition. The argument from the curator's changed when the exhibition opened from their need for more text to what they believed was the traditional visitor's need for more text.

From an organisational culture perspective the espoused values expressed by the leaders did not appear to be in line with the general assumptions about the culture by the staff, who consequently ended up feeling overlooked and under supported. The uncompromising response of the curators to the paradigm shift taking place meant they maintained their insistence on focusing on the artefact level. Their response to the poster exemplifies this stance. Unable to deal directly with the feelings of anxiety that arose they hid behind following the standard operating procedures by telling the correct, authoritative story of the objects using a linguistic message.

The severe reaction of the head of the communications department at our meeting was in response to more than just the design of the poster. It was also a response to the whole concept of the exhibition which just happened to come to a head when she saw the poster. For the first time the concept behind the exhibition had moved from white cardboard

models, sketches and words into a concrete image. At the level of artefact the organisational culture becomes visible but at the same time some of the espoused values and basic assumptions, as outlined by Schein, also become visible, thus making it possible to react to them.

No explanation was ever given to the designer about what happened in the four days between the two meetings where the famous artist produced a new poster. The designer felt he was caught between two or more conflicting partners and that he was being used as a buffer because of his position as an innocent bystander not caught up in old conflicts. The designer responded to this exceedingly unpleasant and aggressive atmosphere by playing his most valuable card. He was willing to give up the whole project, which would mean breaking the contract and not being paid, but most precious of all, it would mean giving up the whole creative exploration and development of the concept for the poster.

His position is strong. He will take not only his poster with him, but also the whole graphic design, thus leaving the project in a position where a great deal of the catalogue, the educational material, the tickets and the book were under production and would have to be stopped and redesigned. The designer was not trying to be calculating and cunning, he was responding emotionally to the aggressiveness of the head of communications. He will always remember the duality of the project. On the one hand there were organisational challenges that were dramatically exposed, while on the other there was an open, highly collaborative creative work process with the architect firm and especially with the head of the architect practice.

Evidently, creativity and organisational culture can collide.

Notes

- 1 Small studios did not commonly have colour printers in 1992, which meant there were logistical and time constraints not experienced today after the advent of the Internet.
- 2 The ad was published on 5 June 1992, the same day THE JOURNEY opened.

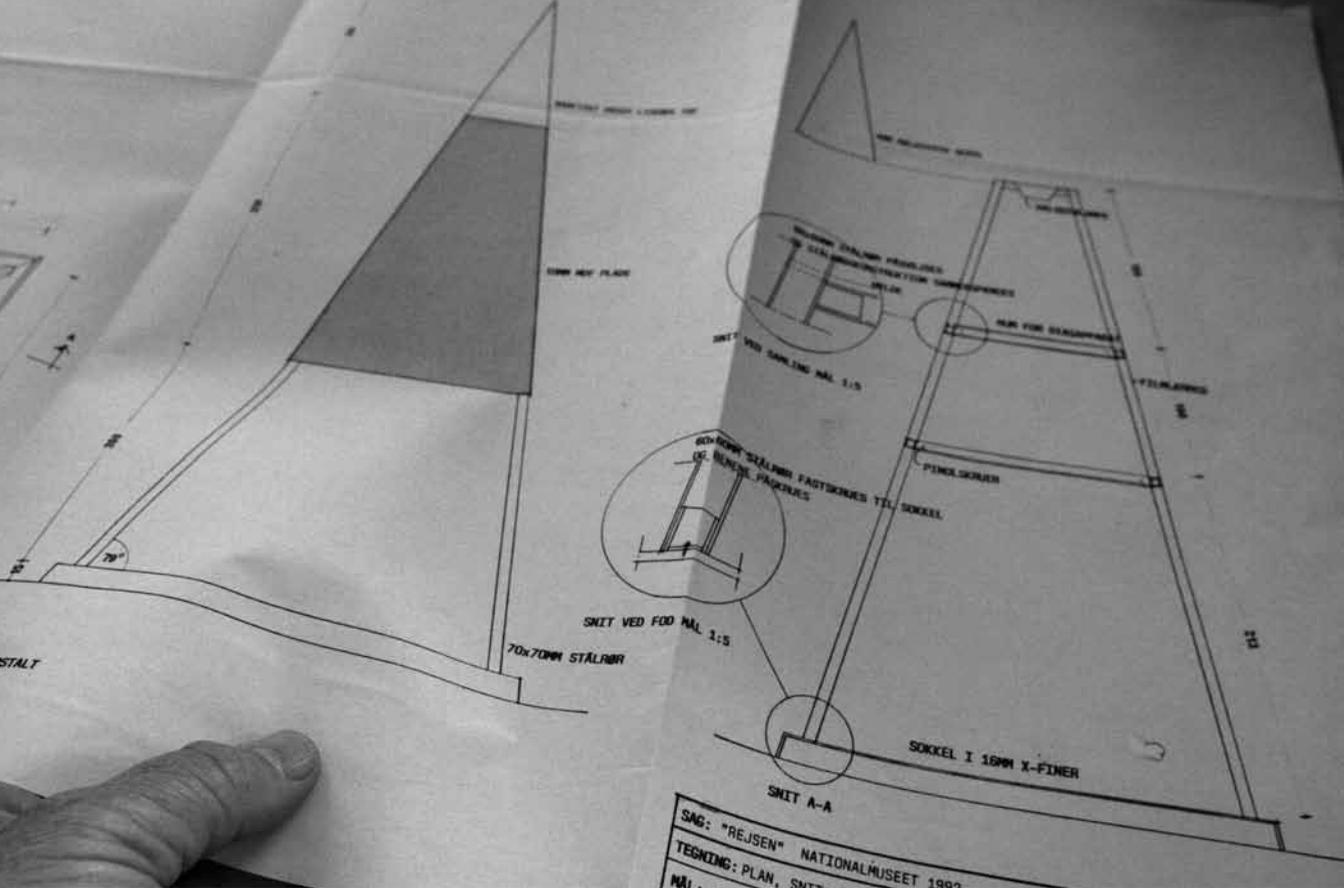
Chapter 17: Journey of the soul – From designer to media artist

The general practice of cultural history museums is to treat original objects as sacred and not alter them in any way when they are exhibited. It is acceptable to construct or insert a context to help understand the meaning and value of the object e.g. by adding a linguistic message to anchor the meaning and interpretation. But how can this precondition be overruled or transformed so the use of the original objects can be displaced and accepted?

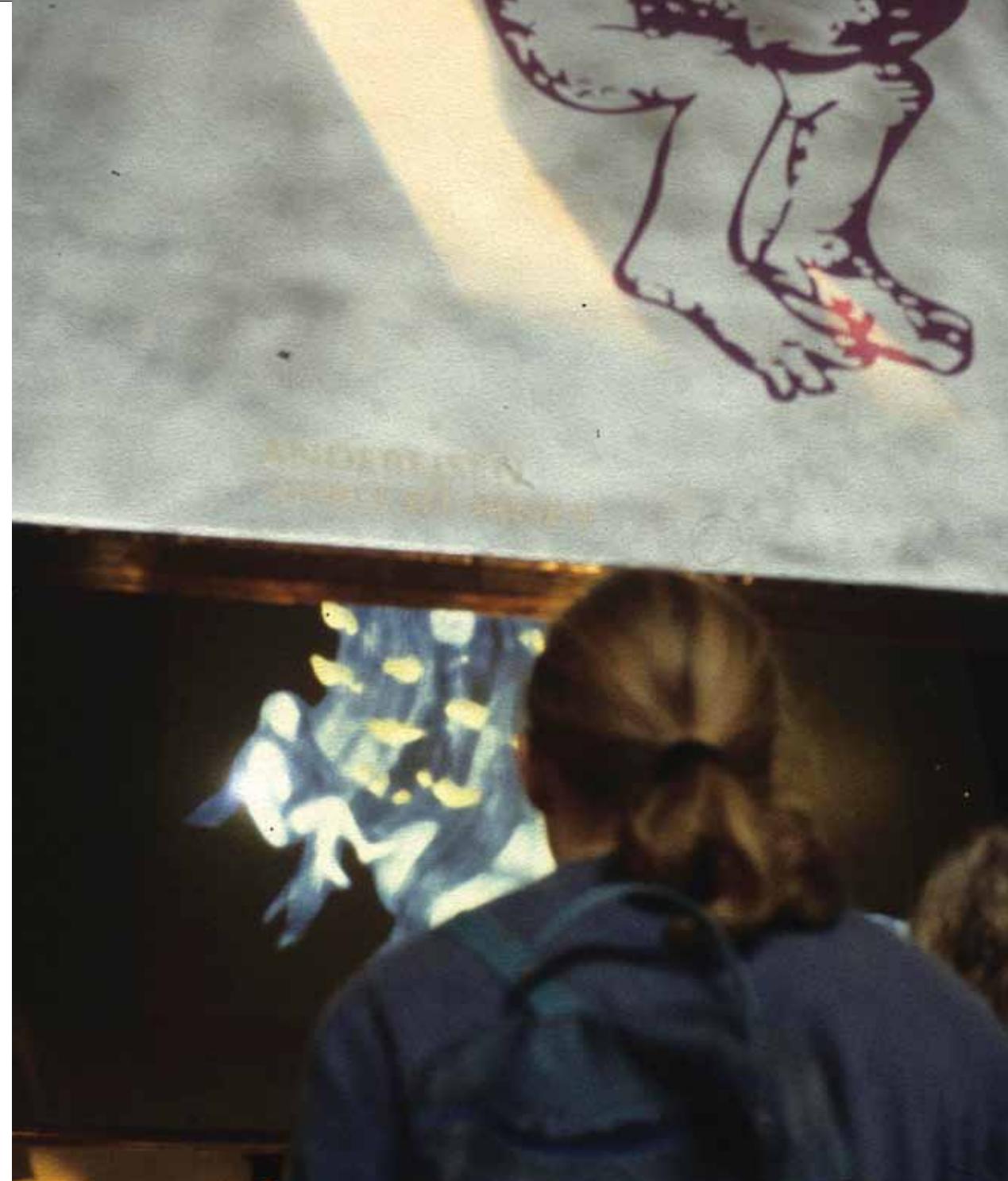
The designer meets with a young architect at the architect practice to hear more about his second task, which is to create the content and the form of a part of the exhibition called the *Journey of the soul*. The designer was fascinated. The young architect, enthusiastic, engaged and highly persuasive, brought to life a drawing he had made of a shaman tower, a more than 6 meter tall, tent-like structure with a 2.5 m² base. It has an illuminated triangular top and the space at the bottom is big enough for visitors to stand and look up to watch the slide show the designer is to create [Ill. 17.1].

Full of infectious enthusiasm, the young architect did his best to breathe life into the tower and the designer. What is shamanism? The architect explained that shamans can enter into a state of altered consciousness at will. While in this state, they make a conscious choice to journey to another reality outside of time and space. This other reality is composed of three layers: the lower, middle and upper world, which are inhabited by helping spirits. The shaman is able to establish relationships with these spirits and bring back information and healing for the community or for individuals. Most importantly, shamans make a practical difference in the real world. Their work brings about a change. The journeys are undertaken with a specific purpose in mind.

A basic principle of shamanism, which is a practice not easily de-



Ill. 17.1: Architectural drawing of the Shaman Tower shown to the designer. The photo shows the surrounding context of the Shaman Tower at the National Museum of Denmark 1992 opening exhibit.



fined, is the belief that everything has a spirit and is alive. A tree, a rock, a drum, and yes, even a computer, has a spirit. If everything has a spirit and is alive, then humans are in a position of equality rather than dominance. Following this logic, shamanism is a radical practice. Shamans do not follow the laws of man; they follow the laws of the spirits. They do not dominate the earth and its creatures; they strive to live in harmony and balance.¹

The architect showed the designer pictures with tents and drums in a book with the Evenki people of Siberia. He stressed that the meaning of the word shaman is 'one who knows'. As it later turned out, his layman enthusiasm for the Evenki and their shamanism would be transferred to another place due to the material objects that would serve as the foundation for the content of the Shaman Tower. A freelance ethnographer whose expertise is Greenland and who has in-depth knowledge of Inuit myths and their shamanism wrote the synopsis for the slideshow the designer was going to do. The ethnographer chose the well-known Inuit legend about the journey to the Mother of the Sea. Briefly, the story is that the Mother of the Sea was upset by the Inuit's evil deeds at their settlement so as a punishment she gathered all the animals hunted by the Inuit into her fiery hair at the bottom of the sea. When the Blind One came down to remedy the situation, he combed her hair, gathered the dirt in a heap and threw it away. At that exact moment everything came alive: a bear, a fox, a hooded seal, a bearded seal, a ringed seal, a harp seal, a common seal, a walrus, a narwhal and all manner of birds.

The ethnographer used to be a curator at the National Museum and was familiar with the famous pencil drawings illustrating this legend made in the early 1910s by the Inuit sealer Karale Andreassen.

Still in the initial creative phase of gathering information and experiences, the designer went to see and photograph the original drawings in the museum. Wearing white cotton gloves, the curators opened the huge boxes containing the drawings mounted on large white passepartout. Ever so small, the drawings were gentle and soft. Drawn with an ordinary pencil, the lines were light gray and lacked the drama and amount of expression that the designer's preconceptions had caused him to expect. The job would not be as simple as photographing these drawings, turning them into 20 slides, creating a narrative of the legend and then adding a sound track of authentic shaman activities comprising heavy drums and loud songs in Inuit. The designer was finished collecting material and impressions and could now begin the creative process of making a slideshow with a whole different approach than the one he had anticipated using.

The constraints and the development

The original material had important constraints. First it was limited

to the legend of the journey to the Mother of the Sea, Andreassen's five pencil drawings and an original sound recording from the 1950s. In addition to these constraints, there were also the ones set by the designer: 20 slides shown from two Kodak carousel projectors that melded into one another, a two-minute narrative and exclusive use of the sound track (i.e. no commentary whatsoever). The entire slideshow would also repeat on a continuous basis. Another constraint was the fact that the final slideshow had to be shown inside the Shaman Tower in an exhibition room where people would be milling about and talking.

In a handbook about the creative production of slideshows the designer wrote a short contribution in the same year as the slideshow on how the journey to the Mother of the Sea was created. In the text, he introduced a rather new digital process for turning pictures into slides on film. This text from August 1992 takes a detailed look at the creative production that took place based on five original drawings. The designer examines not only how his choices are rooted in his own biases, but also the challenges he creates for himself. For example he writes about how he had to deal with how gentle, soft and small the pencil drawings were:

... I did not feel they were an adequate expression of the Journey of the Shaman. The sensitivity of the pencil drawings contrasts sharply with how dramatic the shaman's story is about going into a trance, contacting the spirits, who fly away after assisting him, meeting the Mother of the Sea and using spiritual power to increase the riches of the sea. The drama and the supernatural aspects gave me the idea of using two colours, black and blue. The black background was chosen to create the highest contrast and blue was chosen because it invokes e.g. not only the cold Greenland climate but also the chakra concept of blue and white as expressing spirituality (Ingemann 1992b:91).

The designer's preconceived notions about colour and how they create a contrast are used to remedy the issue of the subtleness of the pencil drawings. Initially disappointed by the material, he found a way to recreate it.

The designer wrote that the central image shows the shaman with his arms tied behind his back and his head tied to his knees [Ill. 17.2], one of his feet touches the handle of the drum and the drumstick moves spontaneously on its own without anyone touching it. There are two observers on the right side of the picture. Descriptive, calm and without drama, the picture communicates what the scene looks like when the shaman is doing what he does, its down-to-earth approach implying that it is nothing special, just an ordinary part of daily life.

First, the designer changed the colour of the image to blue/white, after which he altered the fine shading by increasing the contrast and mak-



Ill. 17.2: The first of Karale Andreassen's original pencil drawings and the newly designed, digitally reversed picture manipulated to show the three observers on the left.



ing the picture lighter. The result was a coarser, more dramatic expression that was further enhanced by using a background black. The majority of the details in the original were removed to focus the visual expression as much as possible. The designer experimented with the colour of the drum, a central object, because it was not especially visible in the original drawing. He chose to make the drum skin a shade of yellow that did not seize all of the attention.



Ill.: 17.3: The original drawing of the three giants and the manipulated drawing in which they are cut out and placed close to each other to represent a unit of attention and hope.



The aim of the central image is to introduce the situation with the shaman and the observers. Seeing the original drawing of the observers as insufficiently clear and impassive, the designer searched Andreassen's drawings until coming across three giants who could be used as observers. Expressive and powerful, they look directly at the viewer [Ill. 17.3].

The solution was to borrow them by cutting out two of the characters, moving them close to the central figure and adding the blue/black shading. Next, they were put in the central image to replace the original people sitting in the corner. By turning them and changing the scale, the designer fitted them into the picture but without adhering to the norms of a realistic room or the laws of perspective. Only the shaman and the drum remain from the original drawing; the rest is rather heavily manipulated, including the shaman when seen in contrast to the original picture.

When choosing what he defined as the *central image*, the designer's aim was to establish not only the scenery but also to link to the events the central image was part of. The drum, floating, was used in some close-ups and the shaman was used alone without the drum, several of the images were made diffuse and blurred with filters to create the illusion of disappearing into space. The central image was used as raw material for a half a dozen slides.

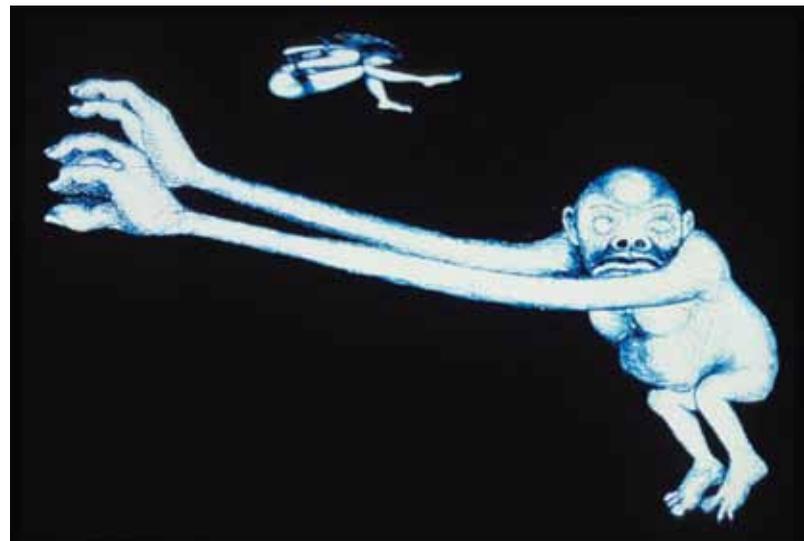
A good and helpful spirit called Amo by the shaman is pictured in a room in a hut in Andreassen's original drawing, but the designer removes Amo from this setting, adds the blue/black tone and a black background, enhances the contrast and then subtly alters the etchings on Amo's body and face to bring out the good spirit's strange and powerful pupilless eyes [Ill.: 17.4]. A sequence of four slides with Amo showing what happened also includes the flying shaman.

In another drawing of the flying shaman, the designer etched in red/orange lines to emphasise that he is flying [Ill. 17.5]. Ingemann writes:

To create the transition between the shaman's hut and the manipulated slide, I used a drawing of the polar sky over the sea. I gave the exceedingly dark black/white drawing a blue tinge and enhanced the darkness by painting more blue/black on top of the picture. I also put a light blue shaft in the northern light to emphasise it even more clearly. The small image of the blurred flying shaman appears in the upper left corner but migrates to a different position on the next slide to indicate that his journey is moving him closer to the Mother of the Sea (1992b:94).



Ill.: 17.5: Original drawing of the helpful spirit, Amo, with his fascinating pupilless eyes on his way to assist the shaman on his important mission.



Ill.: 17.6: The manipulated image in which the etching on Amo's body and face have been altered.



The shaman is sitting on the knee of the Mother of the Sea [Ill. 17.6.], who the designer has chosen to make look softer than the shaman figure, where there is more contrast. Taken from an oil painting of Karale Andreassen, the seal's colour was enhanced and the image copied many times, rotated and scattered in the Mother of the Sea's hair. Some of the seals are starting to swim out of her hair. The designer added more hair to partially cover some of the seals. When the seals are released the shaman's mission into the other world is over and he can return to the world of human kind. The slide show runs repeatedly, which means the beginning of

the story, where the shaman and the three observers are pictured, is also its end and vice versa.

The creative speed – from the idea to the realisation

From a semiotic perspective the form and the content are inseparably woven together. The creative production of the slide show for the Shaman Tower intertwines a variety of contexts and signs into a complex form that includes Karale Andreassen's 1910 drawings, a sound recording from the 1950s and the slide show created in 1992 for the Shaman Tower.

Several questions arise concerning the creative production process, e.g. How does the newly created digital design influence the creative process? How does the final solution relate to the ethical issues concerning authenticity and the designer's principles? How does the museum handle its organisational understanding of objects as the foundation for the exhibition? The answer to these kinds of questions is actually another, quite simple, question: Does it work? From the creator's point of view everything is permissible, e.g. borrowing images and manipulating various objects into a new coherent work. But does this happen in and with the Shaman Tower? Is it an exposition of cultural objects? Is it orchestrated communication? Is it new artwork?

The designer is not clear about his role or the character of his work – or more precisely, he has not articulated his role or the nature of his work explicitly. He is eager to understand and exploit the semiotic field of form and content within the realm of new digital production tools. The creative process speeded up fascinates him as well as the options available for making something totally new and surprising within minutes, like changing colours, removing parts of an original picture, adding parts from other pictures, reversing pictures, changing the contrast and light, repeating pictures, altering the scale and level of definition etc.

After the process he realises that he is able to create completely new semiotic signs never before possible. The designer has in fact become an artist, a media artist. Over the years the media artist has made a multitude of drawings and posters using 'old' material from photographs, but it required a time-consuming process to achieve coherent, powerful new signs. Before the advent of digital technology the creative process involved in making changes by hand was long and laborious.

The creative process has been speeded up, but this does not necessarily mean that time spent on the production process is shorter! The designer has come to acknowledge that the time saved is now spent on making more variations and on greater experimentation. This has also meant gaining a feeling of greater control over the process and a greater openness to change.

The East Greenland sealer Karale Andreassen's (1890-1934) draw-

ings illustrate the myths gathered by the Danish polar explorer Knud Rasmussen, who requested that he do the drawings. Author and artist Ib Gertsen's book describes Andreassen as having, "... a European approach in his line and style" (1990).

Interpreting the work of another artist by transforming it into something else is a well-known strategy called *paraphrasing*, where the idea, in addition to creating something new, is to preserve much of the original. Andreassen produced pencil drawings on small sheets of paper, but the most important aspect of these drawings is the fact that, as part of the Inuit culture, he has experienced the shaman's rituals first-hand; he has heard the sound of the drum and shouted along with the other participants. He knows what it means to face starvation because the animals of the sea have disappeared and he is intimately familiar with how the shaman's journey is a means for contacting other worlds. All of his knowledge has found its way to the tip of his pencil and is expressed through the lines, signs and symbols in his drawings.

The lines in Andreassen's drawings bear all of these cultural references, their authenticity enhanced by the fact this sealer and artist was born over one hundred years ago. Paraphrasing semiotician Roland Barthes when he talks about photography, Andreassen "has been there". Rasmussen gracefully succeeded in getting close to the Inuit culture, their way of living and especially their oral tradition for telling stories, which he made a written record of in Danish. The work of these men is part of the Shaman Tower, the original drawings and the story of their creation lending it authenticity.

Where is the object?

Fortunately, the practice of museums is no longer to exhibit 'the others'. But the challenge remains of how to exhibit spirituality and spiritual practices, for example when the only material objects are from where the shaman's journey starts and ends: the hut, stones, earth, coats, furs and, last but not least, the drum.

Other problematic and difficult themes that were part of the museum's opening exhibition, e.g. the final journey and myths about life and death, were solved by displaying numerous material objects to promote the common sense understanding of visitors. The material objects were the wearers of the more spiritual content. At the Shaman Tower the material object is, precisely that, a tower. From a cultural history museum perspective it would be categorised based on its materials, such as black painted steel, zinc with silk printed drawings and illuminated white plexiglass. A banner at the bottom of the Shaman Tower reads:

This slide show was created by Bruno Ingemann based on drawings by Karale Andreassen from East Greenland made to illustrate Knud

Rasmussen's journey. The following five drawings were used here: [drawings shown as enlarged, silk prints and not in their original format].

The designer's approach of borrowing images was well-received by the museum, which recognised that the role of the designer was not simply to display objects but to design communication. The museum's acceptance of the concept behind the installation also meant the slide show was acknowledged as a newly created work of art.

Notes

- 1 See http://www.alidabirch.com/What_Is_Shamanism.html and <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shamanism>

Chapter 18: Drifting sand - The poetic interpretation and the process of construction. Preparation for unexpected gifts

This chapter is about sand. It is about the story of drifting sand over the course of three hundred years – but it is also about the creative process of sand, drifting sand and the creation of a multi-screen slideshow for a new exhibition. The aim of this chapter is to take stock of the creative process and find innovative ways to address the unexpected gifts arising from meeting resistance to this part of the exhibition's form and content. Crises arose and led to despair, which in turn led to a new framework, creative answers and renewed energy.

The context for this multi-screen show about drifting sand over the course of 300 years is now a nature centre in Han Herred in northern Denmark. The exhibition text that describes the goal for the centre states:

The Han Herred Nature Centre is the central starting point for experiencing Han Herred's natural and cultural landscapes. Here you get an introduction to this part of the country and an overview of what things you can see and do in the area. The target group is the holiday visitor and residents of all ages, but especially those who want to do something together with their children (Sorgenfrei 1998).

The centre presents a walk through the various types of nature using representations, videos, sound and experiments that greatly focus on children and on activities. After walking through the 500 m² of exhibition space, visitors end in a renovated room that used to be a bank vault. This chapter centres on this room.

The head of the Sorgenfrei Exhibition Studio wrote the entire script for the exhibition and on 10 March 1998 she describes the vault as follows:

Drifting sand

Multi-screen show: In the middle of the dune plantation there is an opening into a dark room, where sound and changing pictures come towards the audience. The floor is soft, dark and indefinable. Alongside one wall is a faintly visible raised platform where visitors sit. Straight ahead, pictures and light flicker across several screens and across the walls, some close, some further away. Some sharp, some diffuse. The soundtrack is filled with pictures of, e.g. the wind, the sea, faint shouts, church bells, the sound of crunching sand, horse wagons and cows bellowing, to create a certain mood. Suddenly a male voice begins explaining how drifting sand caused havoc in the area. English and German translations appear in the corner of a picture. Nearly wordless, the show covers the space of a year. The audience is familiar with the story of drifting sand and the conditions people have faced, good and bad, from the 17th century until today. The show is 7-8 minutes long and runs in a loop so visitors can hop in at any time (Sorgenfrei 1998).

This short text turns out to be the most important point of reference for the creative process behind making the multi-screen show. How was this text written? The designer was contacted and invited to participate in the graphic design of the exhibition's typography, layout, production of maps etc. He was introduced to two possible audiovisual productions, where the ideas for the content and form were quite loose and open. One option was doing a multi-screen show about drifting sand.

In the designer's archive I found two yellow boxes with sketches, research material, budgets and a little blue book containing the chronology of the production process. On several CDs I found various versions of the scripts for the show, the original soundtrack and the digitally manipulated pictures used in the final production.¹

The research material reveals the concrete difficulties involved in telling a story that would be understood by ordinary visitors. The story would be about drifting sand caused by a local natural disaster, which was produced mainly by man's overuse of the soil, intensive ploughing, peat cutting and the felling of trees. The transformation of fertile land into sand and tall dunes was accelerated because the dune area was used to put cattle to pasture. Increased cultural pressure on these areas was the root of a growing ecological crisis in the 17th century.

The royal family was interested in the area not because of environmental worries but because of taxes. Legislation threatening arrest and imprisonment was enacted to thwart farmers from affecting and destroying the various plants that prevent erosion. The crown's financial interest led to scientific experiments at the end of the 1700s on how to control the drifting sand and restore it to its original state of fertility. Govern-

ment legislation and financing backed up these measures (Viborg 1788). Plants such as beachgrass, lyme grass and many others were used to prevent drifting and were later supplemented with the planting of Mountain Pine. Drifting is no longer a problem today. One area, Råbjerg Mile, a migrating coastal dune that moves up to 15 meters a year, is maintained for recreational purposes and to preserve a variety of natural habitats.

This is a short version of what the research material contains. The designer's task involved two issues: how to tell the story of a local environmental catastrophe and its influence over the course of more than 300 hundred years and finding pictures to tell the story? The designer's first script for the show states, "There aren't many pictures in the research material. Finding ways to visualise what happened will really be a challenge (Ingemann 1998a).

The first conflict

A commonly held position in photo theory is that a photograph is of something 'that has been', which is what the French semiotician Roland Barthes sees as the essence of photography:

I call 'photographic referent' not the *optionally* real thing to which an image or sign refers but the *necessarily* real thing which has been placed before the lens, without which there would be no photograph. [...] In photography, I can never deny that *the thing has been there*. There is a superimposition here: of reality and of the past (1981:76).

Barthes is so focused on the indexicality of the photograph that he excludes the many other ways a photograph can be an image of something. In the context of drifting sand the designer faced a problem. His main tool is the analogue slide and whatever can be transformed into an image. As a result his research involved finding drawings, copperplate engravings, church paintings and frescos and perhaps old photographs. These various images hold some kind of indexicality and aura based on their time and provenience.

The designer expands how Barthes defines the photograph as a picture of something *that has been* to something *that could be*. This means that what the designer was trying to create was pictures that could be photographed today but that could represent events, scenes or nature that could have existed more than one, two or three hundred years ago.

The designer's first script shows his eagerness to solve the issue of having a lack of pictures. He develops a simple solution to this unpleasant situation by inventing what he calls *word pictures* and *spot pictures*. The word pictures would be presented on a huge 2x6 m cyclorama and the script would describe the content of the pictures: shadows on a church

wall, trickling water, light, sun, cow eyes, sand, the roar of the sea, lyme grass, the moon, night, heather, planting, fighting, dead trees, Mountain Pine, morning ambiance etc. [Ill. 18.1].

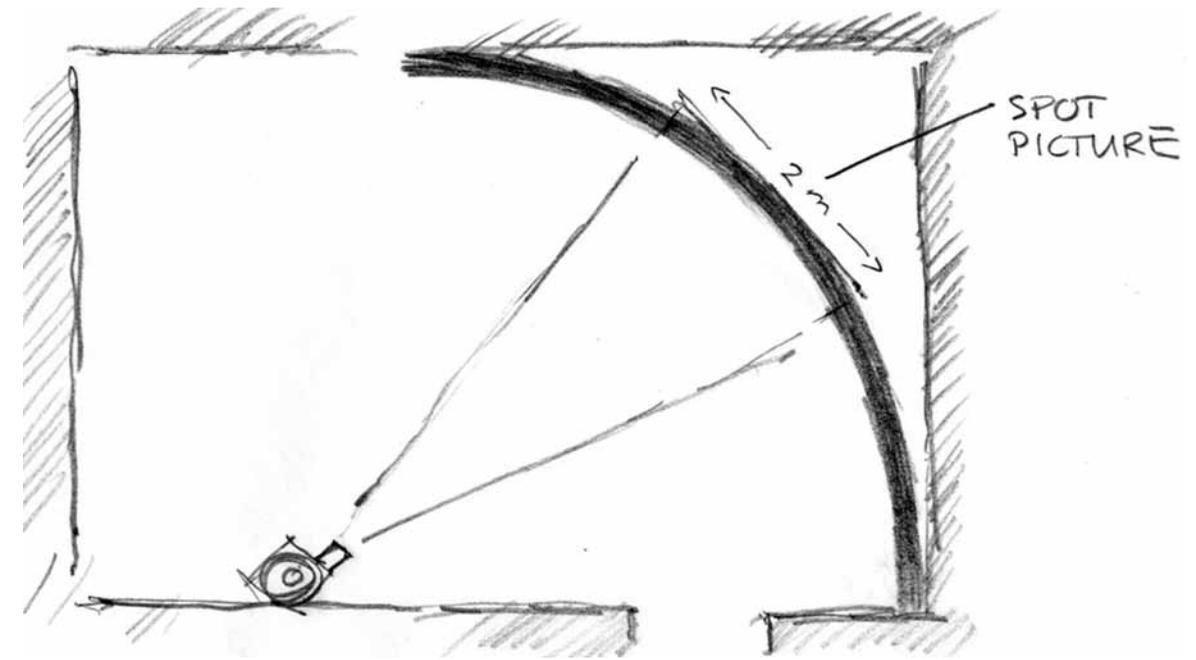
The *word pictures* are supplemented in the script with a description of the sound meant to accompany them. The descriptions of the sound greatly reveal the dramaturgical idea of the script: from vigour and fertility to storms, gloomy desolation and struggles, to energy and victory, climaxing in a sense of openness and easiness.

The *spot pictures* are described only briefly as projections into the middle of the huge cyclorama. Factual and more documentary in nature, they will comprise historical pictures like church frescos and copperplate engravings of Lyme grass. The designer is also thinking of using *spot pictures* to show quotations from laws and articles, but the ideas is not yet clearly developed at this stage. One week later this area has been explored further and expanded. The second script for the show indicates that his feet are more solidly planted on the ground and venturing further now seems possible. In one week the designer will travel to northern Denmark to shoot what will become *word pictures* and to search for factual pictures for the *spot pictures*. This is the point at which the first crisis erupts.

The head of the Sorgenfrei Exhibition Studio hired the designer because of his competences, imagination and sensitivity. She told him that his task was to make a "... poetic and evocative interpretation of the cultural history of the drifting sand over the course of more than 300 years". She and her firm had been hired by the Han Herred Nature Centre, which was going to build a totally new exhibition. The head of this new centre was surprisingly uninterested in following along in what was happening in the individual parts of the exhibition during the development process. He refused to spend any time reviewing or commenting on any script, picture or sound drafts. He was solely interested in seeing the overall script for the exhibition.

The crisis that arose, however, did not involve him, but rather the head of Sorgenfrei Exhibition Studio. She felt that the cyclorama did not live up to the multi-screen room promised in which, "... pictures and light flicker across several screens and across the walls, some close and some further away" (Sorgenfrei 1998). She was also apparently of the opinion that the artist had set the bar too low and had become too lazy and self-satisfied. She thought that a kick in the pants would make him perform more ambitiously.

Devastated and with only five days before his three-day trip to northern Denmark, the artist felt the whole project had been ripped to pieces. While at the Sorgenfrei Exhibition Studio meeting, he realised that some of the architects had already developed ideas about how to have many screens and they had chosen a solution with three screens. Upon returning to his own studio, he wrote a note to himself:



Ill. 18.1: The first cyclorama sketch shows the huge mood-creating, widescreen *word pictures* and the cyclorama's small screen for showing the informative *spot pictures*.

I'm angry now. I've lost my energy for the project ... I'm caught in the coherent narration we have developed and I can't see how to kill that idea and create something totally new ... I feel that something has been imposed on me.

The artist does not like to be rejected, which he feels is not really what happened, but he does have to find a way to incorporate or reformulate the idea or the work pictures and the spot pictures. On one level he felt aggravated by the fact the architects had given the cyclorama idea just a three-screen solution. Close to giving up entirely, the designer stubbornly begins to draw. Not three screens, but five and six to fill the room.

If they want screens, then let there be screens. Suddenly there are four two-meter high quadratic screens and the designer is once again enthusiastic, which is evident in a note he wrote to himself stating, “Unexpectedly there is a meaning with it all; the number of screens provides a comic strip effect and a natural sequence for fitting in oppositions and recurrences”. The designer is proud. Despite a day filled with crises, he had succeeded in killing his old idea and had managed to create a new one that still comprised the best features of the old one. At a meeting later the same day with Sorgenfrei Exhibition Studio, the three people he met with were excited, commenting, “... and we developed the idea so the screens could be positioned 5 degrees obliquely as well as moved forward and backward in the room and placed up and down”.

In the creative process the designer was coming up with ideas but he had also been preparing himself to receive a gift. Working alone for long periods, the artist often did not get feedback except from informal encounters with technical experts. It was an unexpected gift that started with a rejection of his creative work and then a wakeup call that started by walking into a monkey trap.² Clinging to the first idea and afraid to let go, he was able to set himself free and open up to new ideas.

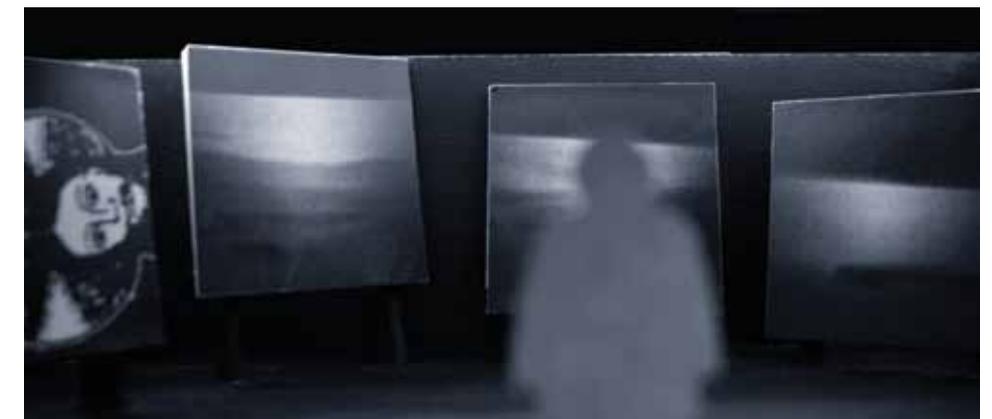
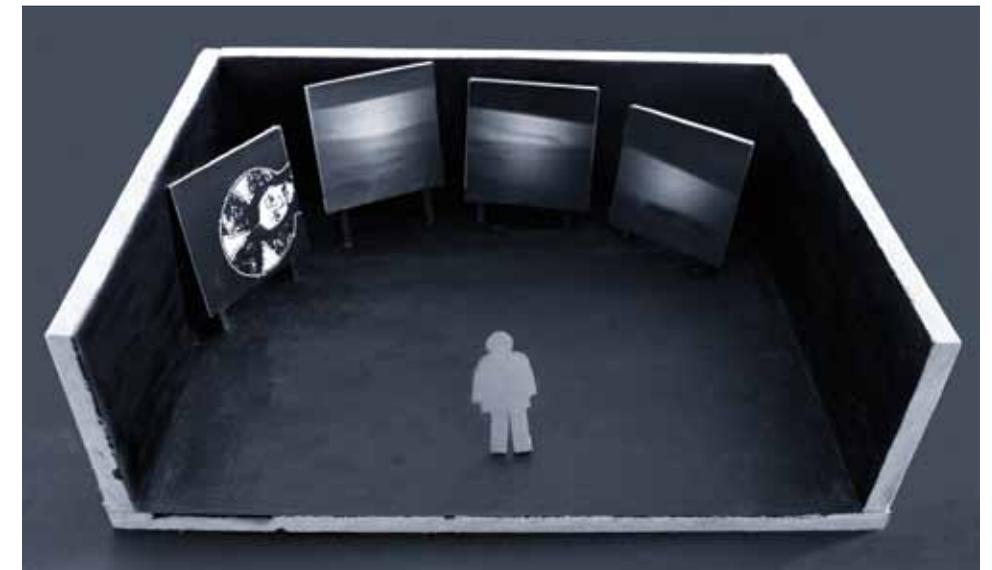
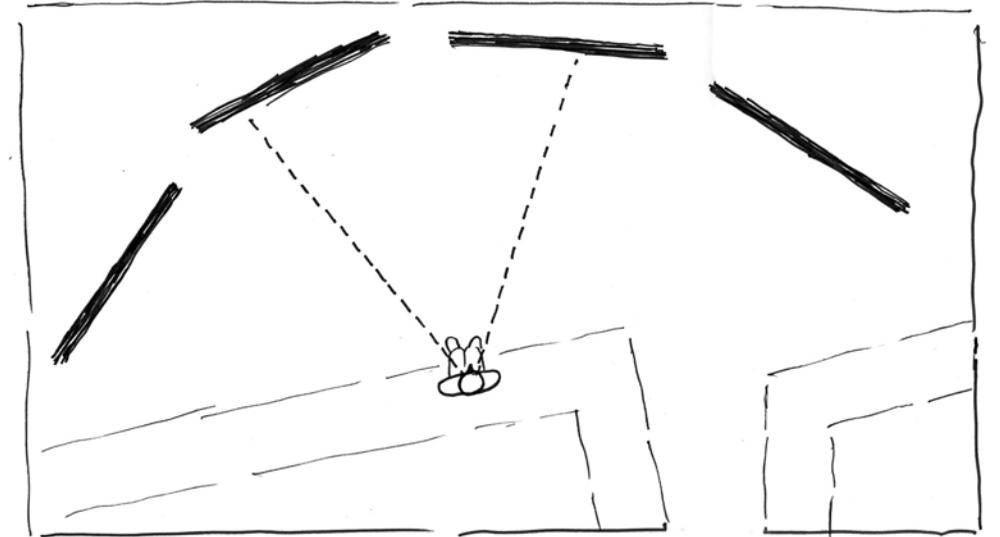
His rather childish idea of dropping the whole project can be seen as his way out of the monkey trap and into a new field of creative development. At first like poison, the gift ended up giving him new energy.

Audience interaction

The final idea for the room and placement of the multiple screens was developed with an audience in mind that would observe like spectators at a tennis match. After entering the 6x9 m darkly lit room, spectators are to sit along a long wall. From this position four 2x2 m screens four meters away are visible but not simultaneously. To be more precise some of the screens only fill the spectator’s peripheral vision because it is simply impossible to focus on more than one or two screens at a time. This is where the tennis metaphor comes in because spectators need to move their heads back and forth between the multiple screens to change their field of focus accordingly [Ill. 18.2].

Looking at how the physical interaction would have to take place had a huge influence on how the multi-screen show developed. The designer’s notes show that the word ‘cartoon’ came up quite early in the process, indicating that the four squares resemble a comic strip, where the storyline follows a fixed format with a beginning in the first frame, further development of the story in the next one or two frames and then an ending that gives closure (McCloud 1993). The viewer looks at the cartoon in a fixed way, reading from left to right as is the norm when reading. Another element that characterises most comic strips is that they have speech balloons.

Ill. 18.2: Although unable to see the four screens simultaneously, spectators can orient themselves by using their peripheral vision. Similar to tennis match spectators, observers have to move their heads and eyes to see the different screens as focussing on more than one or two at a time is impossible. Reconstructed model.



But the media artist is not making comic strips! His multi-screen show has no speech balloons; the pictures are accompanied, contrasted and expanded by a soundtrack. Inspired, the designer/media artist breaks the ordinary reading direction because he is not following a strict storyline. His goal is to make a poetic, evocative and interpretive show. The idea of spectators interacting with the show and talking enthuses him.

A comic strip is solely four frames, but the multi-screen show is spread out over time and changes continuously. There are still photos, but they dissolve and fade between pictures, creating a so-called third picture. The way each photo dissolves into the next also means there are elements similar to that of a video.

The media artist felt free to invent a special idiolect to examine and express the poetic complexity of the drifting sand. Developing the actual show began with making sketches of the movements between the four frames and also between the sequences that follow each other in the narrative structure. [Ill. 18.3].

Similar to the thumbnail sketches designers usually use for print or web design, these structural sketches were like creative openings for the potential form of the final multi-screen show.³ He was thinking of the content of the photographs because the structural sketches were to be used as containers for the content. Next he began thinking about the dimensions of the objects. He would include huge landscapes but also small objects such as a herring or a prisoner foot chain. Figuring out how to include small objects as a panoramic picture was a challenge.

300 years of photography

The next step was to take slides to cover 300 hundred years of history in the space of three days in the early spring when the sun rises at about 6:45 a.m. and goes down around 7:45 p.m. Prior to his trip up north, the designer had been in touch with a half a dozen people he wanted to visit and had to photograph objects, landscapes, plants and other visual content. Most importantly he needed to work closely with the specialist consultant who was his main source for research material.

The considerations and decisions about the physical room, the interaction, the use of the comic-strip concept, the metaphor of the tennis spectator and the terminology of the movements in the four frames influenced how the photographs should be taken. For example landscape pictures would need to be split into four individual pictures.

The rather weak light in northern Denmark in the spring led to the decision to use high speed film that produced a slide with rather large, visible grains much like the structure of ordinary sand.⁴ The standard 24x36 mm format made it necessary to digitize the slides to turn them into 24x24 mm pictures. This process was chosen not only because it met the goal of having poetic, evocative and interpretive pictures better than

TERMINOLOGY



STRIPE



PANORAMA
[AT RIGHT]



PANORAMA
[AT LEFT]



SPLIT-PANORAMA
[FROM INSIDE AND
OUT]



PANORAMA
[LANDSCAPE]



PANORAMA
[DOUBLING -
QUADRUPPLICATION]



HALF-CUT ?

Ill. 18.3 – The designer developed terminology to capture the richness of the idiolect. A panorama of e.g. the landscape could be four pictures turned on successively one by one in a movement from left to right or also right to left.

ordinary documentary pictures, but also because it solved the problem of constructing pictures of “... something *that has been* ... a search after *what could be*”. Jointly with digitization, only one part of the process, the digital manipulation or image editing, was considered to be an important aspect of the multi-screen show.

The final multi-screen show

In a letter summing up his photo session results one week later to the head of the Sorgenfrei Exhibition Studio, the media artist wrote, “I have mounted a sequence of pictures and I have made the final script. In a couple of days I will begin scanning the pictures and manipulating them so they can be part of the sequences as sketched in the script” (letter of 10 April 1998).

Familiar with the individual pictures, their content and aesthetics, the artist decided not to send his script because his thumbnail sketches would only make sense to him. Instead he lets her know that everything is under control, explaining in detail what he has done and what the production plan is for the coming three weeks, “The musician has got the script and he’s seen all the pictures. We’ve talked the whole show through and he’s begun working with the sound. I’m in regular contact with him”. The show will last eight minutes and show about 170 pictures built up from 70 strips, each with four frames. He has also been working with five sequences that he has given the following working titles:

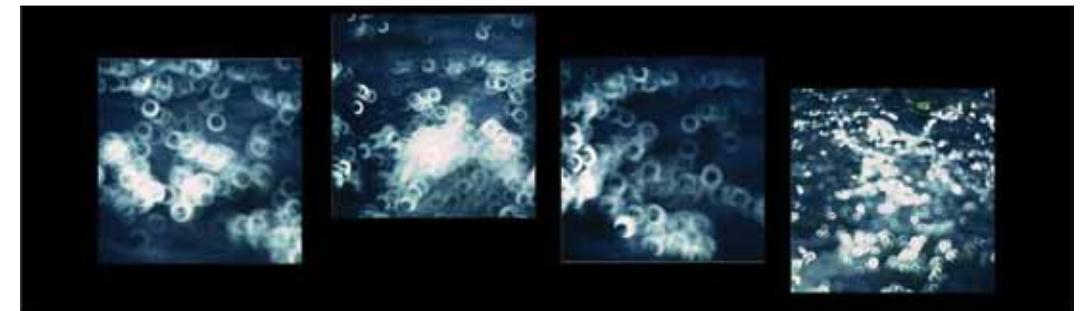
- Abundance – 1 minute, 30 seconds
- White as a sheet – 2 minutes, 45 seconds
- To gain inwardly – 1 minute, 30 seconds
- Organise the battle – 1 minute, 10 seconds
- The balance – 1 minute

Example of an ‘Abundance’ strip

The artist travelled to northern Denmark with an open mind and in addition to photographs of nature he was very aware of other sources for pictures. He was prepared for visual gifts. One of them came from the researcher he met on the second day of his trip. She had found a wonderful pen drawing from the 1850s by Danish artist Vilhelm Pedersen⁵ of four men herding cattle to market. The idea for behind the Abundance sequence was to visualise the concept of the wealth and richness of nature, whose plenty provided a living for peasant and traders without too much struggle [Ill. 18.4].

Accompanying the spectator’s view of the four huge screens with the pictures of sparkling water and reflections from the sun is the slow, meditative sound of a simple flute and the natural beat of a drum. Suddenly the music changes to a striking bell and the first part of Pedersen’s pen drawing appears in the middle of the screens and all the other screens

Ill. 18.4: An ‘Abundance’ sequence excerpt visualising the richness of nature using flashing lights in the life-giving water and the emergence of the cattle being herded. There was one, three, seven etc.



turn black. Then, one by one from the left the screens light up. In order to carry the spectators away from the documentary mode and enhance their feeling of life and calmness, the designer took close photographs of light flashing in the water, adding a dreamlike quality by making the water out of focus.

In another context one spectator responded by explaining that the meaning could go beyond what is cultural and archetypal and capture what she called a hunch, feelings that are difficult to verbalise, i.e. "... moods and something that is more airy than moods" (Ingemann 2005:177). This layer of meaning is not mediated but is one's own experiences in life that are not signs. The designer had this knowledge, not clearly stated but subconsciously as a feeling that he could formulate in his photographic practice and in his selection of pictures.

From early on in the design process the designer worked with what he called *word pictures*. The row or strip of glittering, unfocused water is one of the *word pictures*, which often have motives from nature and primarily present a particular mood or ambiance. The drawing of the cows being herded belongs to the *spot pictures* category. The pictures are meant to be a symbol of richness and abundance closely related to the cows being herded to market. The designers aim is to do more than just show the drawing by Pedersen, who is famous for illustrating Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tales. The designer uses parts of the drawing to make a visual argument (Kjørup 1978). He split up Pedersen's drawing into four frames to create a brief narrative.

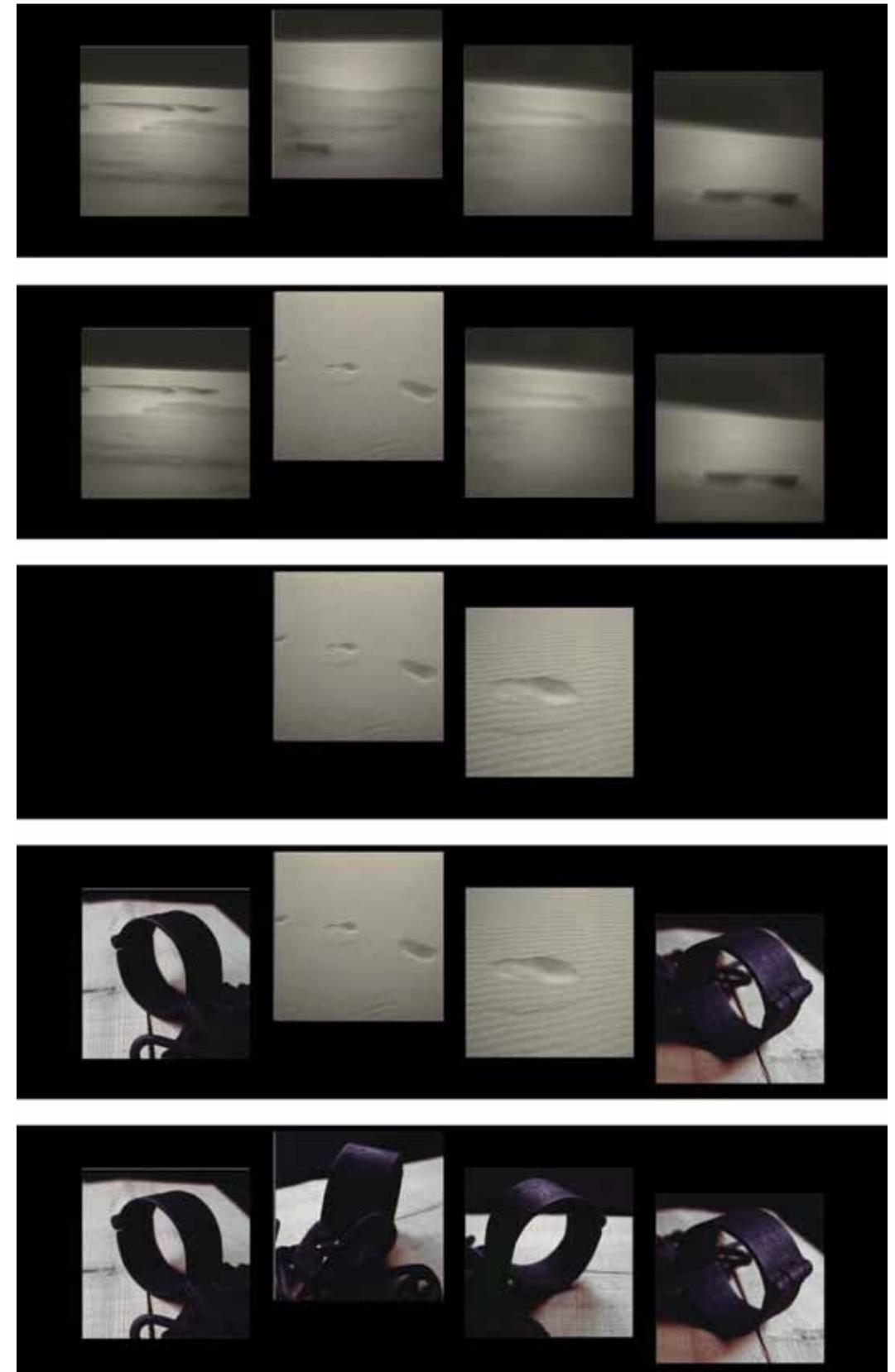
Example of a 'White as a sheet' strip

After a period of wealth, an ecological catastrophe transformed what was formerly a bountiful landscape into an infertile, deserted landscape covered with sand and hit by sandstorms and drifting sand. The cultivated land that once fed many people had now turned its back them, offering nothing but hard conditions to live under. The designer wanted to find an existing, deserted landscape to illustrate how the area looked at that time. As a result he went to Råbjerg Mile, where he found just what he was looking for: sand, sand and more sand [Ill. 18.5].

In the transition from the 'Abundance' sequence to the 'White as a sheet sequence' the soundtrack changes from the quiet sound of the sea, waves and a lonely flute to swirling sand. As I write I am tempted to use descriptive words to cause the reader imagine the nature of the sound, but it is far from naturalistic. To further avoid the documentary mode, the designer chose a musician who used unconventional instruments like beans in a plastic bag or a thin bamboo stick with a string to produce sounds.⁶

The problem of size is also an issue in this sequence. There is a panoramic view of drifting sand followed by close ups of human footsteps

Ill. 18.5: The panorama of drifting sand dissolves into a close-up of footprints in the sand, indicating the presence of humans, flanked by pictures of heavy, old foot chains. The loss of fertile land led to the moral impoverishment of society, arrests and punishment.



flanked by photos of heavy foot chains to evoke the sand of a 300-year past [Ill. 18.5]. While taking photographs, the medie artist developed his ideas about how to depict the objects, e.g. he placed the foot chains on an old table and took pictures from four different angles. Highly pleased with the creative ideas he was coming up with, he wrote a letter to the head of the Sorgenfrei Exhibition Studio describing how creatively satisfying the project was, but also how hectic his days were because he had to take pictures and then develop them.

Looking at the scanned pictures for the 'White as a sheet' sequence however he felt troubled. He was wondering what to do with all these pictures of sand, when he realised that sand also has various colours and shades. He tried to adjust the colours using Photoshop, but it was tremendously time consuming and he was not satisfied with the result. Time was running out. Tired and frustrated, he was facing the second serious crisis in the project. What to do?

Driving home after a long workday, exhausted and unable to think of anything, he was struck by the idea of removing all of the colours! There were too many colours and he could not adjust them to look like a death shroud. To achieve the 'White as a sheet' look, he made all of the pictures black and white, also the foot chain pictures. He felt happy but was disappointed because of the lack of colour. Compared to the other parts of the show this sequence was too detached due to its lack of colour. As a result the designer added a light sand colour to the black and white pictures, thus making them duotone.

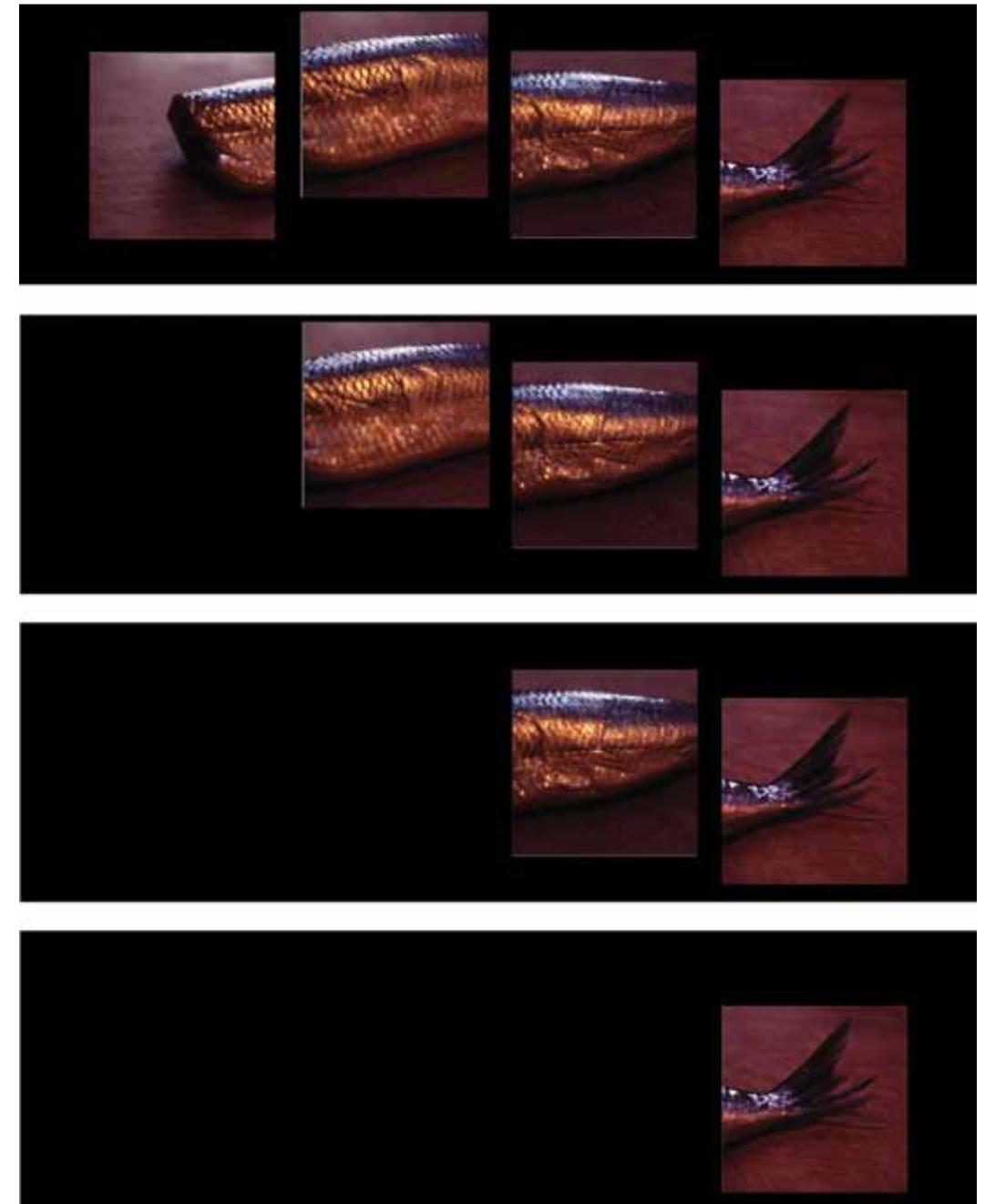
Example of a 'To gain inwardly' strip

In the course of only one generation people managed to control the drifting sand by successfully preventing erosion by planting lyme grass. Pressure was put on Denmark to cultivate as much land as possible when political problems with Germany resulted in the size of the Kingdom of Denmark being reduced. As one famous Dane claimed, 'what is lost outwardly must be gained inwardly'. The medie artist took this famous saying seriously, which is illustrated by the manner in which the sequence builds up to the conclusion. The nearness to the sea makes him think in terms of – not sand – but fish [Ill. 18.6].

'What is lost outwardly ...' is transformed by the medie artist into a rather heavy-handed symbol. First the spectator has to understand that the smoked herring is a symbol of wealth and prosperity. Then the frames show the decline in prosperity as this rather huge fish disappears frame by frame until only the tail is left. And then it disappears. The next strip shows a heather plantation and then the introduction of sheep as the new creator of wealth in the area. Stopping the drifting sand was not enough. Land had to be cultivated and made more useful for farmers.

To paraphrase Gertrude Stein – a fish is a fish is a fish – but the

Ill. 18.6: The smoked herring lies on a glistening wood table. The herring itself is not important but rather symbolises what has been lost, i.e. the loss of wealth.



herring pictures can be perceived literally as food to be consumed; as a symbol of the loss of the Danish territory; or a rather confusing object for the spectator, who may wonder why there was a herring in this multi-screen show about sand and drifting sand or wonder about why the fish disappears one frame at a time?

The artist felt a sense of release in making a personal interpretation of the history of drifting sand and by inserting a visual idea that went beyond a concrete depiction of sand and vegetation. He felt liberated by his task of making a poetic multi-screen show because it allowed him to take on more of a role as an artist as opposed to a designer performing a specified task. This feeling of freedom was stimulating, leading him down a path of detours, albeit ones related to sand. In the Japanese movie, *The Woman in the Dunes* (1964), a young entomologist ends up in a house at the bottom of a sandpit, where a young widow lives alone digging sand to be sold to the cities. He ends up imprisoned by the villagers to help the widow with her endless task of digging sand. He initially tries to escape but resigns himself to his fate, just as the designer, who embraces the philosophy that life is where you are.

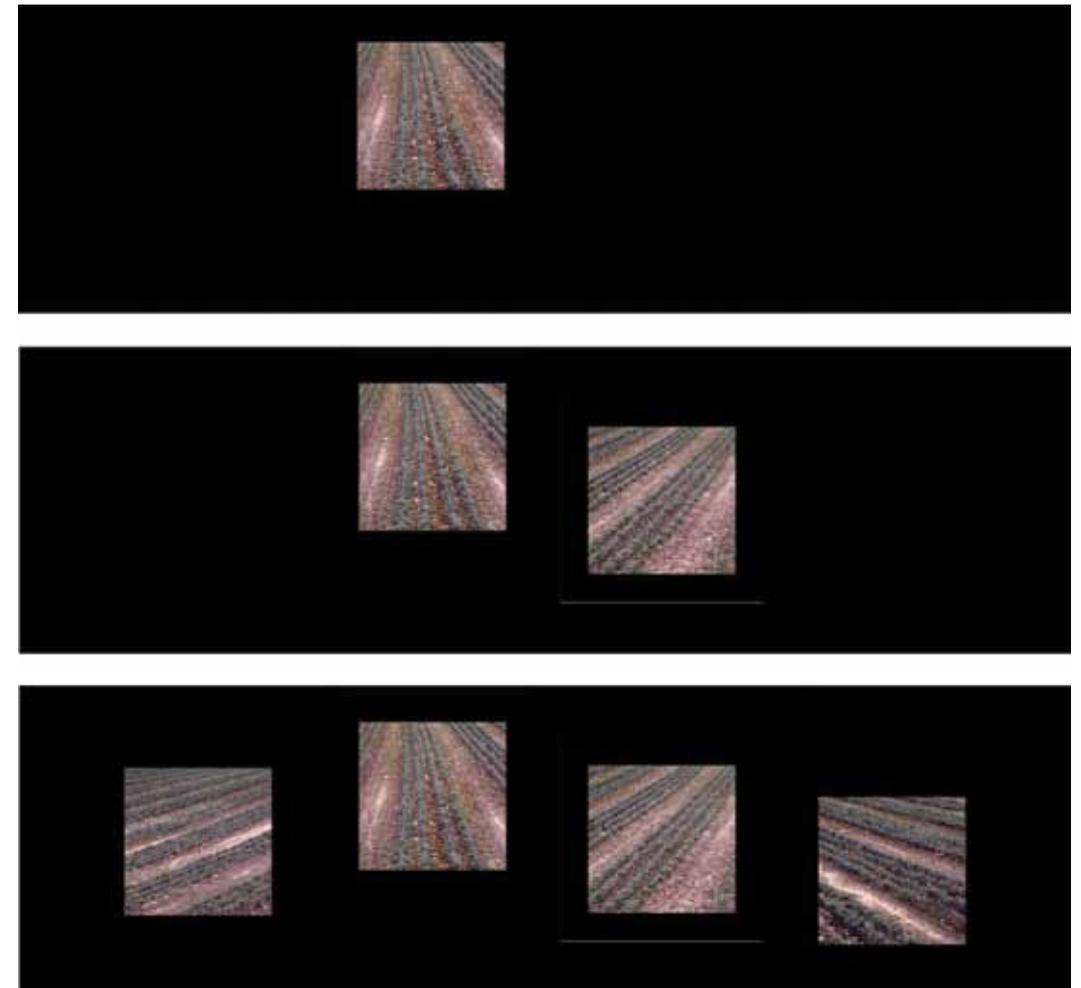
With this highly existentialist approach guiding his moves, the media artist follows his impulse to turn a loudspeaker upwards and let sand fall on it, altering the sound and finally deadening the sound. His personal life also becomes involved because he has only recently discovered that his now deceased father once lived in the area not far from the drifting sand. Upon visiting the small village where his father lived he feels a sense of empathy for the difficult life his father led at the end of World War II. This experience turned making the multi-screen show into a personal matter and is an underlying influence on the decisions made during the artistic process.

Example of an 'Organise the battle' strip

The constant struggle against the drifting sand was too large a task for the local farmers to have sole responsibility for. As a result, when Mountain Pines were introduced to prevent erosion a garden centre was established as a reliable and steady partner. Experiments were also conducted to determine which threes could survive the best. Although aware of these historical events the designer still felt at a loss as to where to begin. As a result he felt that it was necessary to have the support of another set of eyes so he met with plantation owner Ib Nord Nielsen, who knew the history of the area and of his plantation, where the designer photographed Mountain Pines as seedlings; fresh, strong trees; and dead and decayed trees. Receiving help from others was also an important gift the designer was open to receiving [Ill. 18.7].

The insights the artist gained from the plantation owner were immediately transformed into action as they drove around the plantation's

Ill. 18.7: The rows of small Mountain Pines symbolise extreme order and regularity.



forests. The planter pointed out the Mountain Pines and told the story of how they were experimented with, the vestiges of the trials conducted still visible on the plantation. The media artist took the photographs to be used in the four-screen strips.

The 'Organise the battle' strip is the sequence that is most like a documentary, but the artist added his own interpretation in two ways. First, he augmented the drama of the story about the production of saplings, the planting of the trees into the woods and then the dead and decaying trees being replaced by better, more refined versions of Mountain Pines. Second, he added a strong graphic line by enhancing the rows of small trees to stress the diagonal and vertical power in some of the pictures. Consequently the focus of the pictures became the rows rather than the individual saplings.

The plantation owner was kind and friendly but he was partially showing the media artist around as a favour to the researcher who had arranged their meeting. Sensing that he was under pressure to get done rapidly, the media artist worked swiftly to understand the story as well as to quickly focus, take a picture on the spot and then immediately continue to the next.

For the audience the whole story is really not clear, which is not necessarily an issue because the aim of the multi-screen show from beginning was to be poetic and interpretive. As spectators, the audience has the responsibility to take the aesthetic and narrative elements of the show and relate them to the nature right outside the Nature Centre. Their task is to add value and new ways of looking at the story of the drifting sand.

This part of the multi-screen show is of interest in relation to one certain spectator, the head and organiser of the whole exhibition and the multi-screen show. Refusing from the start to follow the development and production of the show, the only the description he had was the brief one given at the start of this chapter (Sorgenfrei 1998). The opening day was the first time anyone had seen the show with its four huge 2x2 m screens. Granted the media artist had seen the show when it was being programmed and when the original soundtrack was synchronised with the pictures, but this was in the studio on a small 70x70 cm screen. In the darkness of the vault with powerful speakers the huge screens had an overwhelming impact. The media artist's notes indicate that he was nearly moved to tears and enveloped by a feeling of soaring high. He had written, "I feel light!"

One hour before the official opening the media artist met the head of the centre and they ended up, nearly by accident, alone in the vault, where this new spectator would see the multi-screen show for the first time. Affected by how coincidental it was that they were alone, the media artist wanted to let the head of the centre experience the show undisturbed, but

was simultaneously consumed by an urge to enthusiastically explain the whole idea behind the show and his goals for the show.

Confused, the head of the centre was disappointed and not proud or enthusiastic. The confusion likely stemmed from the fact that he had neither a clear idea of what he was getting or that he had an exact idea of what it was going to be like, i.e. a factual documentary story; so he was disappointed and not pleased and excited. The media artist should have followed his hunch about explaining his intentions and the story to the head of the centre.

The media artist was pleased that he had at least had a close working relationship with the head of Sorgenfrei Exhibition Studio. Having tracked the process, she could easily follow the many decisions that had been made and the worries that had arisen. She was excited about the artistic expression and claimed that the media artist had fulfilled her wishes about doing a poetic interpretation. Even though she did not have a clear, preconceived idea of what the show should be like, it lived up to her expectations. The head of the centre's reaction abruptly put an end to this apparently happy progress. Nearly as close to a genuine spectator/user as possible, having his understanding and getting a positive response were important for the exhibition and the multi-screen show.

As a result of a conversation between the media artist and the head of the centre a useful improvement was made in the first month after the official opening. A poem written by the media artist was added to introduce the show and provide a framework for the story:

Drifting sand
The sand came 300 years ago
And ruined the fertile soil
The peasants complained
The clergy complained
The king lost his taxes
The struggle against nature began
Lyme grass was planted
The heather came - and finally, the Mountain Pine
What is lost must be replaced
Battles were won - and lost
Until we found the right balance
?

Example of a 'The balance' strip

In the end, it is all about balance. The land is no longer used for producing farm products and the most important product is the landscape: the sand, the drifting sand, the lyme grass, the heather and the Mountain Pine. The landscape no longer needs to be held under such strict control,

but maintaining a balance in the fight between man and nature is still necessary [Ill. 18.8].

Most Han Herred Nature Centre visitors are tourists who also visit the nearby huge sand dunes. The landscape has become visually and physically part of the experience economy for tourists.

The media artist is in familiar territory: words and letters. On the spot he takes pictures from the top of the sand dune and downhill to provide an overview of the letters and words tourists have made over time, mostly of their own or their beloved's name. The media artist walks downhill and in between the letters and names, some more than a meter tall. Making beautiful, well-formed letters with stones is difficult, especially at a close distance. The media artist feels he is making more than pictures; he spends many hours walking each day to allow his understanding of and closeness to the plants, landscape and climate to be absorbed by his body and to be appreciated.

The spectator, in this case the media artist, notices many clues about the new, changing experiences of nature, culture and the landscape seen in the light of cultural history. The clues are not general, but personal, highly visual and phonetic, i.e. they involve words and letters. The spectator has also experienced something uncommon, namely the whole multi-screen show with the invention of an idiolect with four screens like a comic strip. The show is a unique experience, guiding the direction of the spectator's gaze like an audience watching a tennis match, their heads and eyes following – not the ball – but the movement of changing pictures as they appear, disappear and create movement.

And the end ...

Intensely interested in this project, the media artist saved much of the research material, including video recordings at the vault when the show was officially presented; drafts of various scripts; some of the correspondence with the people involved; his blue notebook with addresses and ideas for the visualisation of the multi-screen show; not to mention the architect's various drawings. The extensive amount of material available was broad.

He must have saved so much because there was something of interest besides just the project. He had been wondering about the creative process and the project when he ran across a book by the Mexican poet Octavio Paz that reflects upon how the language of the poem is everyday language, and yet everyday language says things quite out of the ordinary:

The relationship of poetry to language ... in the poem - a verbal crystallization - language deviates from its natural end, communication. (Paz 1995:4).

Ill. 18.8: Human interaction with the landscape is especially evident at the bottom of the sand dune, where people make words with stones in the heather.



Words do not say the same things as they do in prose; the poem no longer aspires to say, only to be. Poetry places communication in brackets ... (Paz 1995:5).

Later, when we have overcome our amazement ... we discover that the poem presents us with another sort of communication, one governed by laws different from those that rule exchange of news and information (Paz 1995:5).

The media artist was struck by the thought of placing communication in brackets – and the powerful saying that the poem no longer aspires to say – only *to be*. He thought about the exceedingly strong semiotic bond between the photograph and indexicality that had been so strongly underlined because of thinking about communication in these terms.

In the production process the media artist faced a few severe crises, but the material in his archives shows that thinking about placing communication in brackets and more seriously looking at the multi-screen show in terms of being and thereby in the category of a work of art does not seem especially central. His day-to-day practices show that he seemed rather convinced he was on the right track and that his unarticulated concept of a lyrical interpretation was sufficient for him to act adequately.

His anchor in this fairly ambiguous situation was his trust in his own resources – but more specifically, he understood the necessity of reducing the amount of information he met in the written research material and in the physical meeting with the landscape and other people. His most important anchor was making frameworks, obstacles and limitations that restricted and narrowed down what he could practice. A highly familiar aspect of creativity is that the ideas, concepts and new innovations develop more powerfully when there is some degree of limitations and frames.

Framing ... is a result of our desire to organize our experiences into meaningful activities. Following the ancient Greek saying that the man who sees everything is blind, it can be claimed that frames, by directing our focus, make us notice what is important, therefore ensuring that frames, by directing our focus, make us notice what is important, therefore ensuring clarity and simplicity in the definition of the situation (Misztal 2003:82).

The first earth-shattering crisis in the creative process initiated a shift away from a non-focused or badly framed situation caused by the uncertainty of the situation, but mostly by the rather sloppy and unambitious attitude of the media artist. He was pushed into being part of rigid

development process and frame that in the end helped him create innovative and surprising ideas and concepts. The four main frames were: space, metaphor, time and production technique.

The first framing was the *physical space*. In collaboration with the architects, four 2x2 m screens were installed along one side of the former bank vault. This frame served as a productive catapult for developing visual ideas and constructing the narrative of various picture resources and developing the soundtrack. This framing immediately placed viewers on bleacher-like seats along the other side of the room four meters from the multi-screens. This distance meant that they would have to watch the pictures similar to a spectator at a tennis match.

The second framing was the *metaphor of the comic strip*. This frame was a way of anchoring the development of the visuality in what the media artist called the 'single strip' and the relationship between the approximately seventy strips in the show. This framing was extremely stimulating, making the media artist feel as though he was inventing something quite new in this field of projection and narration. He took the metaphor of the comic strip, twisted it and transformed it into pristine fields.

The third framing was *time*. With the spectator in mind, the length of the multi-screen show was set at just under eight minutes. That was one sort of framing. But the brief two-month time frame for the project was also decisive in the production process, which comprised strict research deadlines, writing the script, taking photographs on the spot, researching pictures, scanning slides, digital manipulation, writing a new script, the sound production and shooting digital images for slides.

The fourth framing was the *production technique*. This process was time consuming and included choosing grainy film for the slides, selecting which slides to scan into digital images to be Photoshopped and then regenerating them as slides for the eight Kodak carousels. The pictures had to be controlled by dissolve control units. There was also the process of digitally recording, manipulating and mixing the soundscape created from the sounds of various objects.

The four framings were initially obstacles for the media artist, but they proved to yield unexpected detours and gifts in the production process. In the end, the multi-screen no longer aspired *to say*, only *to be*.

Notes

- 1 The multi-screen show for Han Herred Nature Centre was produced by Bruno Ingemann / Communication. Script, photography and photoshopping by Bruno Ingemann. Hanne Mathiessen was a specialist consultant. Music by Christian Glahn. Sound studio with Henrik Øhlers. Programming by Nicolai Vestergaard-Hansen. Digital pictures shot as analogue slides by Colorgruppen.

- 2 A cage containing a banana with a hole large enough for a monkey's hand to fit in it, but not large enough for a monkey's fist (clutching a banana) to poke through the other side. Used to "catch" monkeys that lack the intellect to let go of the banana and run away. (http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/monkey_trap)
- 3 Art directors and graphic designers use the term 'thumbnail sketch' to describe a small drawing on paper (usually part of a group) used to explore multiple ideas quickly. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thumbnail>)
- 4 Kodak 5040EPH, 1600 ISO was the film used to produce 900 slides.
- 5 Danish artist Vilhelm Pedersen (1820-1859).
- 6 Hear and see the multi-screen show in this scaled-down version: www.present-on-site.net

Openings - Category, objects and communication

Exhibitions and museums are primarily a means of dissemination and communication, whose attention is focused on visitors/users. This means that the most important actors in the communicative process are the visitors and how they dialogically use and

interact with the exhibition as a whole. This Theme in the book centres on the sender or the producer and designer of new exhibits and on the considerations that must be taken to achieve visitor-oriented communication.

The museum inspectors and curators I encountered were remarkably interested in marketing and getting more and more people to visit their museums and the subsequent income, but they were surprisingly less interested in how they approached communication on site. I quickly discovered that they had a relatively narrow view of communication, primarily defining it as what was in text panels. It is however much more than that and includes videos, sounds, smells, movement, interaction – and talk, i.e. also talk *between* visitors and not just from the curators or educators to the visitor/user. When seriously broaching the subject, we found that we did not totally disagree and yet the explicitly formulated argumentation had an underlying tone of unease and unspoken objections. As it turns out, the objects and categories the objects were placed in were sacred and untouchable. The chapters in this Theme present questions and

discussions based on the communication situation that exists in the network of museum people and its various discussion groups and outsiders like me. One of the key issues turned out to be authenticity.

One of my main research interests is photography and especially news photography. In one of my projects the goal was to see with the eyes of the readers and users of newspapers. The aim of this reception project was to show how ordinary people, and not journalists or editors, related critically to examples of manipulated photographs on the front page of a newspaper and to how newspapers twisted the reality and event behind the photographs. Sixteen people were told what had been manipulated and were thus aware of the transformation of a real event into a partially fictional story that could also possibly prove to be threatening for the people involved in the event.

The informants clearly related to the various forms of authenticity in a manner that was startlingly different from the attitude of the professionals. The extended individual interviews with informants show three different attitudes toward so-called authenticity or the relationship between the photograph on the front page and the real world. The attitudes among the informants toward authenticity can be divided into three positions. The first attitude toward authenticity was the *naturalistic position*, which focuses on the production circumstances; the second was the *pragmatic position*, which centres on how the people in the picture were represented; and the third was the *constructivist position*, which focuses on the image created by the media (Ingemann 1998:23-32).

What is an authentic press photo? Can hyper photos that look like real photos but that are actually composed of parts of other photos be considered authentic when placed in the context of a headline and a text about e.g. racism and a burning cross on the front page of a newspaper?

The informants take different positions. Some of the informants feel quite reluctant about the hyper photos. For them it is crucial that the film negative remains untouched, even though a picture's quality is tied to the production circumstances. They hold a naturalistic position, i.e. what you see in the picture is what was in front of the photographer's camera. Preferably, the images must function as data, a feature that allows the photo to retain its truth value and authenticity. This position is often touted by the press's own people.

The newspaper makes use of the picture in a context. This focus on the use of the image leads to another kind of authenticity. On the one hand the image must give a fair representation of the people in the picture and in such a manner recognisable to those being presented. On the other hand, the picture should also match the perceptions readers have of racism. The image of a large burning cross is generally perceived by the participant and by the reader as manipulative. For informants who take a

pragmatic position, the physical manipulation is less important than the psychological manipulation.

Despite the violent and powerful emotional content of a burning cross, some of the informants discuss and accept that as long as the image is informative it does not actually matter whether it has been manipulated or not. Informative images must live up to the reader's wishes that the people in the pictures are presented in a way that they themselves can accept and that readers do not feel they have been emotionally manipulated by the image.

Informants negotiate with themselves about the meaning. They mostly relate their media-defined images of racism with race riots. Consequently they are taking the constructivist position, where the lengthy discourse in the media positions this particular article as an artefact – i.e. as an artificial product. The readers must decide if it should enter into their consciousness as a fact. The informants however do not accept the article and image as a fact, thus relegating it to being a picture artefact. Stripped of meaning, it becomes an empty object and not information.

Although almost all of the informants are dismissive of the physical processing in the example provided, their reasons for doing so differ considerably. One-third of them are resistant because they do not want photographs to be manipulated. The rest are dismissive because they do not want to be manipulated. The ethical debate moves from dealing with the production circumstances to centring on the use of the image. Thus it is no longer a discussion about the physical manipulation of the image but about the relationship between the reader and the image.

On the surface this research project on news photography does not seem especially relevant to exhibitions and museums, but it is to museum and exhibition objects – be they real or copies. The context and the authenticity in the relationship between visitors and objects in a certain context reveals more about what issues are problematic and makes it easier to deal with and discuss them. "It is not my problem but someone else's", as one curator exclaimed.

This concept of coming from an unexpected position opens up for challenges that are often closed and difficult. It is always easier from the outside to see what is happening and to get a brilliant idea or to dig into other people's problems and the relations between objects, contexts, situations and users. This is also the case when it comes to the other core issue, namely the taxonomies, categories and dialogical communication.

Communication and dialogue

There are two classical textbook examples among teachers specialising in communications that involve a description of a giraffe (Jensen 1987:101).

Example 1:

Since ancient times the familiar giraffe (Giraffa) with its peculiar long legs and neck has been widespread across Africa's open Savannahs. Its body is approx. 2¹/₂ m long and at its crown it stands 5-6 m tall. The tail is long and ends in a tuft of hair. In the space between the forehead and ears both sexes have a pair of hairy horns. Some breeds also have another pair of horns on their necks. Stretching the length of the back of their necks is a short, upright mane. Their coat is made up of numerous dark brown patches separated by lighter hair (...) Giraffes feed on acacia sprigs and other trees, snatching food with their long tongues and using the lower incisors and canines to masticate.

Example 2:

Giraffes are the tallest animals on earth. They can grow up to six meters tall. They live in open country, but strangely enough it is still difficult to catch sight of these big animals from a distance. This is of course due to their colour, which blends in well with their surroundings the majority of the year. Their coat has a large quantity of dark spots separated by a lighter brown. Giraffes run fast, but frequently lions still manage to surprise them. It almost always happens at waterholes when the giraffe stands with its legs astride and drinks. Lions sneak up, jump on the giraffe's back and kill it.

The first description is characterized by a taxonomy closely related to a professional classification. The emphasis is on a precise (anatomical) description of the giraffe in a specific order from its appearance to its diet. Textbooks contain similar taxonomical descriptions of other animals. In the second example, the author's text uses emotive words and narratives and is based on an imaginary dialogue guided by an ecological perspective. The principle of the imaginary dialogue provides answers to questions the author presumes the reader wants to pose.

Example 1 is a prototypical taxonomy and demonstrates how categories based on professional classification practices can be a helpful tool in research. They can however also function as obstacles in the process of communicating with people who do not have a professional knowledge of anatomy and natural science. Example 2, in contrast, goes beyond a strict taxonomy. The description of the giraffe's height sounds like a *Guinness Book of World Records* entry and the narrative about the waterhole dramatises the situation when it describes how the world's tallest animal gets into trouble because of its long neck and legs.

Education traditionally promotes examples like the second one, employing dialogical texts to dissemination information. The underlying motive for pointing this out is that two key aspects are contained in

one text, namely the use of various and more complex categories easily linked to daily life and the use of narratives to reinforce this connection to daily life.

While this may be true, it cannot be a universal claim that everyone will learn from this kind of information solely because of the categories and the narrative form employed. The Danish media researcher Anker Brink Lund presented a fruitful development in how users, readers, visitors and target-groups are viewed by expanding our understanding of age, educational background, lifestyle and ethnicity by focusing on two central aspects, namely if users are interested in and/or affected by the communication presented to them (Lund 1986:33). By crossing two categories with the objective and subjective requirements, the discussion of the user can be split into a four-field model that includes: *the engaged*, which is someone who is both affected by the actual issue and thinks that it is important; *the worried*, which is someone who is not personally affected by the issue but believes on everybody's behalf that it is a problem; *the unengaged*, which is someone who is objectively affected by the issue but does not think it is the most important one; and *the uninterested*, which is someone who is neither affected by the issue nor thinks that it is important to do something about.

Take the case of kindergartens, which is a topic routinely covered by newspapers, radio and the local media. Information is regularly provided about kindergartens, the physical condition of the facilities, staffing ratios and accidents. There are two groups of people who should be particularly interested, the responsible authorities - and the parents who have children in kindergarten. Directly affected by conditions in the kindergarten, both groups have an objective need for information about kindergartens, but having an objective need is not enough. They are affected by the conditions, but they do not need to experience that they need more information. They need to know more than just the fact that problems exist, they need to know about problems they personally perceive as important (Ingemann 1990:284-285).

If people cannot relate to the information personally and have no objective interest, like in the case of *the uninterested*, then they will be beyond the reach of the information museums and exhibitions provide. Even the presence of a lucky coherence of objective interest and subjective affection does not guarantee successful communication. Relevance can be gained by using categories that relate to and interfere with the user's lifeworld and that need to be discursively constructed close to their knowledge, values, emotions and opportunities for action (for more about the Attention Model see p. 118).

Circles and dialogue

Nowadays words like user involvement, dialogue, interaction and user-generated content float in the air in the field of museums, reflecting an interest in trying to be more open to user knowledge, values and emotions and trying to think about how users can be involved physically. This focus is based on an initiative that did not come out of nowhere. Specific goals, energy and motivation are necessary to invest in a project. An exhibition could be made by anyone anywhere if the definition of an exhibition is “– an exhibition is what someone calls an exhibition!”¹ This statement is discursive and open to user-generated content based on the user/producer’s own choices.

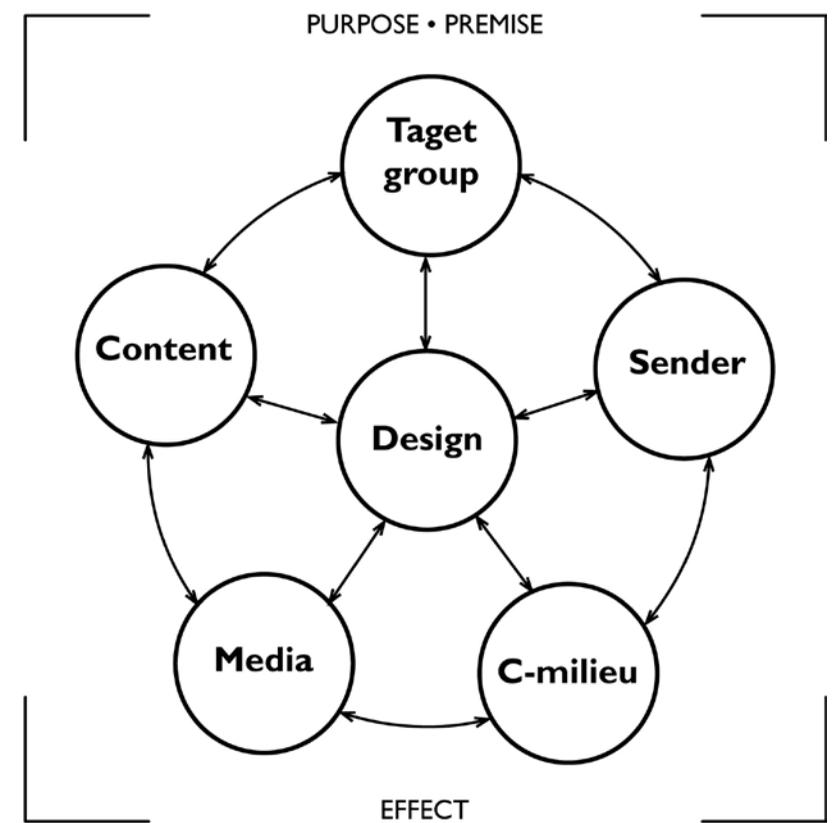
It makes a difference whether an exhibition takes place on the street or at a local library, in a huge national museum or in the dining room of a private home. Multiple circumstances influence an exhibition and the communication and dissemination needed. All of these considerations can be summarised in a communication model that goes beyond traditional thinking comprising a unidirectional flow of information to encompass flow-oriented communication. The most important statement in a well-known book on planned communication is that, “There is nothing so practical as a good theory”, as Kurt Lewin once wrote (Windahl, Signitzer & Olson 1992).

Dissemination can be planned and not grow solely out of the objects an organisation collects. Based on pragmatic theory, the model for planned communication, the *Circle Model*, focuses on the numerous relations that need to be clarified to support the creative process to develop a message in a certain medium. Concretisation, experimenting and formulation lead to the creation of a well-argued, explicit communication plan and a well-founded media product (Ingemann 2003).

The aim of the model is to create an overview of the complex relations at stake when dealing with designing communication on a conscious level. Working intuitively through the elements in the model is possible, but working only intuitively makes it difficult to communicate to other people in the project group or organisation. The model ensures being explicit about making choices, which in turn makes it possible to use the model as a foundation when what is to be communicated is presented to other people [Ill.: 19.1].

Using the Circle Model

This communication model comprises six interdependent circles that influence one another, which is an indication of how dynamic the model is. When the problem area is clarified in one, two and three circles, then decisions made must be looked at again and changed. The model is a running plan that is not complete until the exhibition (or other media product) is complete. Three circles, target group, sender and content, are



Ill. 19.1: The Circle Model
(Ingemann 2003).

closely related and serve as the foundation of the entire working process.

From the museum perspective it is obvious and almost natural that the *content* in the form of objects is the core of a museum exhibit. It is important however to see the content of the communication as more than just objects and professional categories. It must be seen as broader issues that relate to society and to the lifeworld of the exhibition visitor/user. This means that how the content is experienced must contribute with both new and well-known knowledge.

The *target group* (visitor/user), which is the most crucial element of the model, must be determined based on theories about lifestyle, age, relevance and affection. Uncovering the knowledge and attitudes of the target group about the topic to be communicated is necessary. Constructing a clear, specific image of the visitor and the visitor experience is important for the producer. A *model user* who has e.g. competences, linguistic accomplishments, lexical knowledge, personal and political attitudes and

values and experiences with various media will be consciously or unconsciously inscribed into the text, which can be comprised of objects, visuals, soundtracks, screens etc. Personal biases, research and contact with the target group mean that constructing a model user to govern creative work is necessary and important (Ingemann 2003:122).

All content and messages have a *sender*. The organisation or institution is the formal sender of the message and over time the sender constructs an image that the receiver reacts to. Do visitors feel this image expresses trustworthiness and knowledge or does the receiver feel mistrust and scepticism toward the sender? The sender can also be limited to for example a museum curator. The sender constructs an image of her/himself through the content and the expressive and narrative choices. In the eyes of the receiver, one can appear as either authoritative or as an equal.

To be useful in the creative process of creating content and form for what is to be communicated in and around an exhibition, having a rather clear image of the elements involved is necessary. So we are talking about the form of the experience for the target group, the sender and the content as seen from the point of view of the visitor or receiver, but even the institution has a goal and purpose regarding the entirety of what is being communicated.

The next two circles, *media* and *communication milieu (C milieu)*, are also closely related and expand one's options. The media are exposed on a specific site and the C milieu is influenced by many other communication channels at the site. More importantly, the C milieu is influenced by a large amount of information about the same or contiguous topics in society that create a breeding ground or resistance to the new communication.

The media in the exhibition site are not given beforehand and the visitor has no fixed understanding of what an exhibition is, should or could be. An exhibition does not have one format and depends on e.g. not only the simplicity or complexity of the content but also on the ability of the conglomeration of media (e.g. visuals, sound, participation, text, odour) to be supportive of the content to be expressed.

At the centre of the Circle Model is *design* and all the other circles radiate from this point, summarising the outcome of the analysis and decisions made. Design is the phase where content and form are united into a semiosis. Danish researchers Camilla Mordhorst and Kitte Wagner Nielsen call the relation the semantics of the form, as inspired by German researcher Peter Szondi, who believes that the form is settled content (Szondi 1959:9). Mordhorst and Nielsen's book on cultural history exhibitions concludes by reflecting on form:

As long as the form is given and not the object of reflection, the curators will be bound by its content. All exhibitions will be based on

an evolutionary line of thought that reduces the past to the present in an embryonic phase. They will have human being as the absolute reference point and all the objects will primarily be illustrations of the history of civilisation. They will take their departure from an ideal of objectivity that claims that history can be described objectively, the curator's interpretive presence unheeded. They will take the delimitation of the nation state literally and even the sovereignty of the nation state can be questioned. Finally they will lecture and overlook that the history cannot be presented unequivocally and uncritically (1999:100).

Design is not just designing without meeting the challenge of the content, and as Mordhorst and Nielsen say, the premise is "... that a form always contains content. This means that the form cannot state any content, because the form itself carries content" (1999:3).

The *purpose* and *effect* of the communication frames the six circles in the model. The Circle Model requires a succinct formulation of what is to be communicated as well as a clear articulation of the experience the user is to leave the exhibition with.

The Circle Model is an open concept that has room for user input, but it requires users to fill in the simple list of questions with the rich, fluid and exiting content that has to be given an adequate and inspiring form that promotes the development of the communication with visitors.

From the visitor's point of view the considerations taken by the curators, communicators, museum professionals and designers are invisible because the communication plan is not communicated to them, just the final exhibition, where the visitors are met by the museum. In this meeting is when the rejection or acceptance of the exhibition takes place. The museum can open its arms and take visitors seriously by giving them the feeling that the museum wants to understand them and wants to meet them with the right amount of stimulation, understanding, surprises and new challenges. In her inspiring book, *The Participatory Museum*, designer Nina Simon emphasises that, "People use the institution as meeting grounds for dialogue around the content presented. Instead of being 'about' something or 'for' someone, participatory institutions are created and managed 'with' visitors" (2010:iii).

She also asks how participation works and finds that there are two counter-intuitive design principles at the heart of successful participatory projects:

First, participants thrive on constraints, not open-ended opportunities for self-expression. And second, to collaborate confidently with

strangers, participants need to engage through personal, not social, entry points. These design principles are both based on the concept of scaffolding. Constraints help scaffold creative experiences. Personal entry points scaffold social experiences. Together, these principles set the stage for visitors to feel confident participating in creative work with strangers (Simon 2010:22).

As Simon mentions, participatory techniques are an additional option in the culture professional's toolbox and must, as the Circle Model indicates, besides being part of the experience visitors are to have, be planned ahead of time by professionals able to provide the crucial scaffolding and design.

Openings - Category, objects and communication comprises five chapters that variously look at these central concepts without providing patent answers about how to do exhibitions that are more open and inclusive. The questions discussed are intended to form a basis for promoting greater use of communication and design-oriented practices for exhibitions on site.

Chapter 20 – Museum: The three monkeys – A fluid category

This chapter examines how the see-no-evil, hear-no-evil, speak-no-evil monkeys are used in various communicative contexts and with quite different purposes. The historical background is outlined, but the key point is that the three monkeys do not have a specific form. They are a flexible conceptual idea that works as a highly fluid metaphor. Focusing on this material but simultaneously un-material imagery has caused me to suffer from collector's syndrome. I ended up gathering so many examples of the three monkeys that I finally had to make a museum, albeit a small on-line one called, Museum: The three monkeys.²

Chapter 21 – Object images and material culture – The construction of authenticity and meaning

Objects from daily life can be seen as tokens of culture and society but often they end up as garbage. What decides whether an object stays defined as rubbish or whether it is elevated to the category of valuable object filled with authenticity and meaning? How does this transformation take place and why do the majority of objects remain relegated to the dark shadows of oblivion? Objects from daily life can tell a story and telling the story contributes to creating meaning.

Chapter 22 – Ten theses on the museum in society

Based on the premise that individual exhibitions are more than just

exhibitions and in order to open up for a broader understanding and basis for discussion, I wrote almost ten years ago ten theses on the museum in society. Today, if I were to revise these theses I would also focus on participatory museum tools. The overall contribution of the ten statements was to clarify and open a new field of discussion that centred more closely not only on visitors and users but on the communication necessary to establish the museum as an essential part of society and to address topics of societal interest.

Chapter 23 – Non-art and self-creation in the art gallery

At art galleries young new visitors are of course met by the art, but also communication about the art in the form of labels, text, folders etc. This chapter focuses on three main areas: how this communication defines the visitor as a somewhat passive recipient of information; how the visitor performatively involves herself to construct her identity using the exhibition and the artist as part of the creation of identity; and how the visitor creates communication in the art gallery. This leads to a discussion of the conflict that arises between curators and visitors as well as a presentation of ten dilemmas to be addressed and resolved in the context of the art gallery.

Chapter 24 – Ten dilemmas professionals face

As a result qualitative reception studies of cultural communication with more than sixty people and in the use of various media, it has been possible to synthesise good advice to be used by the designer as well as the learner/user to generate experiences, meaning making and interaction and to create cues for change in a visual event like the exhibition in any form. The standpoint here comes from the perspective of the person-in-situation. Transforming this view and understanding into the perspective of the producer or organiser reveals ten pieces of advice or fields that need to be considered as dilemmas.

Notes

- 1 See page 212 in chapter 14, the introduction to *Invisibles – The exhibition design process*.
- 2 <http://akira.ruc.dk/~bruno/Ingemann/3Monkeys.html>

Chapter 20:

Museum: The three monkeys – A fluid category

This chapter examines how the see-no-evil, hear-no-evil, speak-no-evil monkeys are used in various communicative contexts and with quite different purposes. The historical background is outlined, but the key point is that the three monkeys do not have a specific form. They are a flexible conceptual idea that works as a highly fluid metaphor. Focusing on this material but simultaneously un-material imagery has caused me to suffer from collector's syndrome. I ended up gathering so many examples of the three monkeys that I finally had to make a museum, albeit a small on-line one called, Museum: The three monkeys.¹

Your image or ours?

As a semiotic sign collector you look for meaning in the visible world and meaning is created when the two sides of the sign, the signifier and the signified, are combined in a qualified way. The form and the content are two sides of the same coin and can never be separated without becoming a non-sign.

Physically miming the form and content of a sign like the see-no-evil, hear-no-evil, speak-no-evil monkeys is a simple task; you can cover your ears, your mouth and your eyes with your hands based on an image inside your head of the three monkeys. What material formed the basis for creating your three monkeys? Was it paper, wood, alabaster or bronze? How big are your monkeys? Are they matchbox size? As big as the Statue of Liberty or as large as the Eiffel Tower? What do your monkeys look like? Are your monkeys three-dimensional or are they flat? Are they monochrome or do they have many colours?

The original image

When you look at illustration 20.1, which image of the three monkeys most resembles the inner picture you have of them? Does the style or what they are made of make a difference to you? Why is our need to have an 'original' image secondary?

When picturing Leonardo da Vinci's Mona Lisa, imagining a detailed portrait of a young woman with an indecipherable smile sitting in front of a somewhat peculiar landscape is easy. Whether we have seen her on cups, postcards, scarves, t-shirts and posters or in the Louvre in Paris, our shared internal images of her do not differ dramatically.

There is a positioning between two categories of images. The ubiquitous image of the Mona Lisa, despite variations in material, shape, size and colour, is always of the same. Regardless of the form of expression, the woman is always the same, or at least the same one in Da Vinci's painting. This indexical relationship is crucial to our ability to experience the same phenomenon, i.e. picturing a woman identical to the one Da Vinci painted in 1506. Even a minimal amount of changes to her image would obliterate its iconic nature, turning Da Vinci's Mona Lisa into just any other woman. The image of the three monkeys however is of a different nature and belongs in another category, which I will touch upon later.

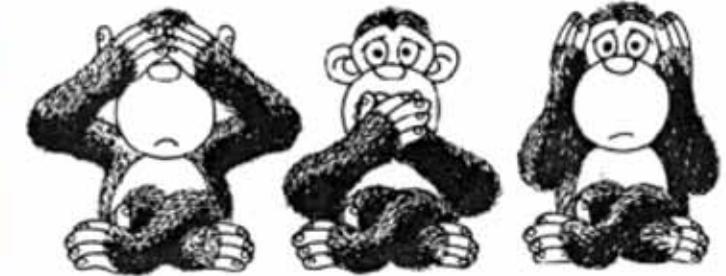
How to avoid being a collector of signs

In our society we are continually bombarded with pictures, many of them thrown at us intentionally. As potential users we have the option of actively filtering them out. Roland Barthes, when discussing the kinds of pictures that hit and wound him, found that they share a common feature or what he calls the *punctum*, which he defines as images not that he seeks out, but that seek him out. These are the kind of homing images one must beware of (Barthes 1981).

Being a sign collector can be an all-consuming task. In order to prevent it from dominating one's existence, I realised two different strategies could be used to avoid becoming one. One involves accumulating images and the other comprises constructing images. The former is the model museum collections abide by, while the latter is the one creative production follows.

The three monkeys in use

Creating new images is a means for keeping down the collection of other signs in order to either stabilise them or totally eliminate them. From the outset I was uninterested in having anything to do with the symbolic content or traditional story behind the see-no-evil, hear-no-evil, speak-no-evil monkeys. In a good, creatively inspirational way I was demolishing part of a shared visual culture, but one day I began seeing



Ill. 20.1: Which one of these six variations matches your image?

1) Bronze 1990's collector's item.

2) Cover illustration of Nielsen & Rasmussen: *Write, Speak and Be Heard: A Communication Handbook for Social Workers (Skriv, tal og bliv hørt)*, Forlaget Børn og Unge, 1996.

3) A 1950's Japanese figure in wood. Gift from Simon Heilesen.

4) Half-page picture in the culture section of the newspaper *Politiken*, 17 September 2002.

5) Postcards published by Woman Gallery, 1972; made by Anne-Marie Hoeg.

6) Painting by Lesser, around 2002.

the three monkeys as a metaphor for communication, where the three monkeys are in a dialogical relationship between protecting one's self and self-censorship.

The three monkeys can be looked at from a position in which an attempt is made to see the world and the events that are occurring from a rosy, limited perspective. This self-imposed narrow perspective can be likened to a horse wearing blinders, i.e. there are things you do not want to see, hear or speak about.

The opposite is also true. From a production perspective, situations exist where an organisation has something it does not want to be seen or heard and which is therefore something that should not be talked about. This dynamic raises a number of specific issues often present in a communication situation.

The three monkeys in an article

The following excerpt is from a 1984 article I wrote for a popular Danish magazine called *Samvirke*:

See - hear - speak!

Daily, we are bombarded with images, words and sounds. All sorts of information come crashing down on us.

The three monkeys ensure that there is something we will never hear about.

We use the three monkeys to protect ourselves against intense media exposure.

We discover the see-no-evil, hear-no-evil, speak-no-evil monkeys when we produce videos, exhibitions, websites, radio programmes ... (Ingemann 1984)

I would also like to present the closing quote from this article as it illustrates a tone that was dominant in 1984 and which captures the focus given to the discourse on universal access to the media:

When you take the first step and begin producing knowledge and experiences in a specific media, you also simultaneously take two steps back, the distance giving you a better eye to see what you do not want to see, hear or talk about.

Taking the first step alone is difficult. If you are with others you can support each other. See. Hear. Speak!

The new collector strategy

Using this productive approach of stealing an idea and a picture to use it for my own purposes did not allow me to isolate the image of the



Ill. 20.2: Nikko, Japan.
Photographed by Simon
Heilesen ca. 1990.

three monkeys or to make it into just one concept. There were various connotations and narratives connected to the metaphor of the monkeys. I started looking for examples of how the three monkeys were used. People began giving me small figures, drawings and references to other texts with the see-no-evil, hear-no-evil, speak-no-evil monkeys [Ill. 20.2].

In Japanese culture the three monkeys have a religious connotation. At the beginning of the late Muromachi period (1333-1568), it was customary to carve them into *koshinto*, stone pillars used during the observance of *Koshin*. According to the early 19th century Kiyomasa Shoran, the three monkeys are also associated with the religious complex of Sanno, where they play the role of divine messengers. The three monkeys represent the three truths of the Tendai sect in Buddhism. The founder of the Tendai sect, Saicho, is said to have carved a representation of the truths in the shape of monkeys. There is a famous carving of the three monkeys in the holy stable of Toshogu Shrine in Nikko, Japan. Cuts of the monkeys were believed to prevent disease in horses. A postcard from Nikko states:

The three monkeys are said to come from China and that they cover their eyes, ears and mouth to symbolise the old maxim, "See no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil". It is believed that the Buddhist priest Dengyo (762-822) was the first to engrave the three monkeys on a *Koshin* tablet.

Initially used in a religious context and later associated with Buddhism, the three monkeys have been around for at least 500 years. The three monkeys espouse certain values. They do not merely encourage no seeing, hearing or speaking, but seeing, hearing and speaking no *evil!* What values are being communicated? What is the evil? In the 1857 Pre-Raphaelite composite photograph, *Two Ways of Life*, by Swedish photographer Oscar G. Rejlander, evil is equated with games, adultery, wine, excessive enjoyment of life, theft, murder and death. My collection of eighty sets of monkeys shows what is defined as evil. Four examples from my collection will be looked at more closely to demonstrate how the three monkeys are used and in what context.

Three sad monkeys

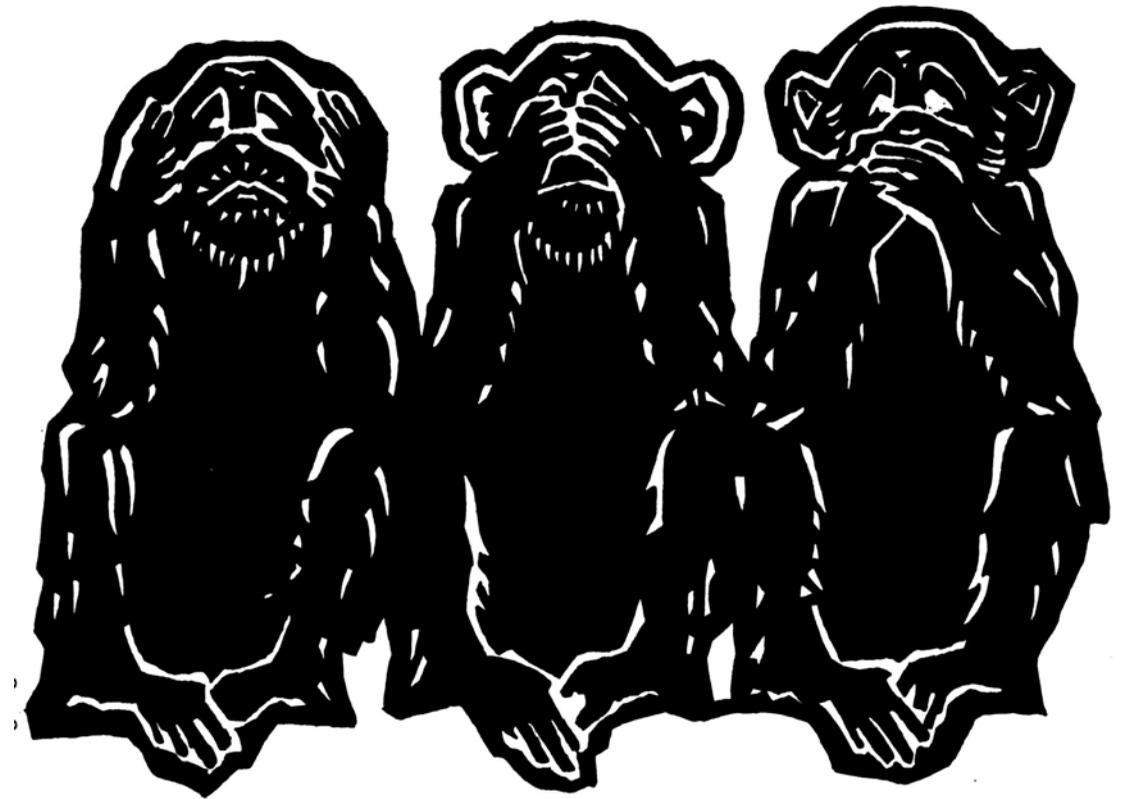
The three monkeys are on the cover of Sigrid Thomsen's book, *The Three Sad Monkeys (Tre triste aber)*, which is about weak readers. Thomsen uses them as a metaphor for weak readers [Ill: 20.3]:

Look, we - weak readers - are similar to the three little monkeys. We manage partly by being copycats. We imitate the clever ones that can read, hear absolutely correctly and convincingly repeat what we

Ill. 20.3: Cover illustration of Sigrid Thomsen's book, *The Three Sad Monkeys (Tre triste aber)*, Gyldendal, 1980.

Artist: Eva Wulff.

The illustration is also used in the newspaper *Politiken*, 19 March 1995 with the headline "Interfere".



hear. We have to rely on and even believe in them. We try in good faith to say what they told us - as we have seen it. The intellectual 'top' manages us. We must trust someone. We do not hear. This means that we often find it difficult to perceive correctly. Our ears are hit. We are aurally impaired. We do not see. This means that we have difficulty reading. Our eyes are hit. We are visually impaired. We say nothing. This means that we have difficulty articulating what we want to say, what we feel and what we think. Our mouths are hit. We are verbally impaired. The three monkeys - that's us. And us in today's society: the three sad monkeys.

Evil

Thomsen uses the three monkeys quite concretely. They are not merely similar to weak readers, they *are* the weak readers. Being in a situation where you cannot see, hear or speak, as weak readers are, is clearly painful. The evil they experience is exclusion from a community, from society at large, both as recipients of experiences and information but perhaps also as participants in the democratic dialogue and development of society. Who exactly prevents the monkeys from seeing, hearing and speaking? They do. Thus what creates obstacles and limitations also has a visual focus.

The three women

The postcard pictured in illustration 20.4 leaves one guessing what year or decade it was made. The three sad monkeys, also a linocut made with simple strokes, solely depicted monkeys. In this case, the monkeys have been transformed into something entirely different, a woman, or rather, three women. In addition to having either their eyes, ears and mouths covered, they are occupied with another task. The first woman is stirring a bowl, an activity that apparently does not require her undivided attention; the second woman, with sparkling eyes, is bearing a tray, laden perhaps with coffee for her awaiting husband; and the third woman, weary, stares in the air while nursing her child. There are an extra set of hands keeping their eyes, ears and mouths shut, unlike the traditional image, where the monkeys do this themselves. What does the image communicate about the social standards that govern what the proper role of women is?

The evil here is a glimpse of what constitutes and constructs the limitations women face in life. It is not a specific woman who is depicted, but a woman of a certain class, most likely bourgeois if her clothes, hair and makeup are any indication. The postcard is agitating against the suppression of women, but the women presented also appear to have succumbed somewhat to this oppression.

Every third Dane

Early in 1998 the Danish Cancer Society ran a campaign prior to its annual door-to-door collection in the spring. The artwork and design shown in illustration 20.5 were used on posters, brochures and postcards. The drawing of the three small figures is perhaps a little harsh. Lined up from left to right starting with the no-hear and no-see monkeys, the no-speak monkey has obviously been annihilated with force, pieces of the monkey lying on the ground in front of it. The text that precedes the image, "When you know that every third Dane gets cancer", is quite clear. The three monkeys, one damaged, represent the Danish population, one-third of whom will supposedly die of cancer. Or perhaps the last monkey



Ill. 20.4: 10x13 postcard published by Woman Gallery, 1972. Made by Anne-Marie Hoeg.



Ill. 20.5: Danish Cancer Society, 1998 postcard campaign proclaiming that every third Dane will get cancer.

represents the group that has gained new insights and a sense of awareness and is no longer willing to ignore the evil of cancer. Following the image is the statement, "... It's amazing that we still have to ask for help".

The rhetoric becomes a bit messy at this point. The three monkeys represent ignorance and the refusal to hear about evil, i.e. that one in three Danes will get cancer, but they also represent the general population and the third that will get cancer.

What makes the campaign thought provoking? Who is the campaign designed to jolt into action? The evil might not be cancer, but rather ignorance. The assumption is that readers are so ignorant they have not yet grasped the gravity of the situation, and yet, at the same time, the sender would like to recruit them to help with the door-to-door collection. Why did they choose to alter the no-speak monkey? What does this choice symbolise? Are you allowed to raise money but not speak out?

Being civically active

The significance of the three monkeys can of course also be changed. In 2002 Action Aid did a workshop on being civically active and used a logo with the three monkeys, but they had big ears, wide eyes and a large mouth, none of which were covered [Ill. 20.6]. If anything, the hands were used to help amplify the sights and sounds. The message was that being civically active means seeing, hearing and speaking out to ensure democracy and development in society. These three monkeys perhaps lose a bit of their rhetorical force and become somewhat of a cartoon designed to promote what is good as opposed to fighting evil.

None of the other seventy-nine monkeys in my collection are altered in precisely this way. They are however used with different communication goals in mind, e.g. they are used to reveal, investigate, make claims, propagandise, lie, exaggerate, understate and create laughter. In general, the monkeys do not deal existentially with evil as Rejlander does, where games, adultery, wine, excessive enjoyment of life, theft, murder and death are seen as evil. The topics the three monkeys say volumes about without seeing, hearing or talking include:

- Environmental destruction
- Pesticides
- Risk of drug addiction among e.g. doctors
- Lack of telecommunications
- Political torture
- Official speech
- Ignorance about health issues
- The socioeconomically disadvantaged
- Lack of transparency in municipal politics



Ill. 20.6: Action Aid Denmark 2002. Being civically active.

Ill. 20.7: Images – or something else? Examples of how varied the style of the monkeys is.



Lack of attention to advertising
The political self-sufficiency of the US
Political distortion of reality

What do the monkeys express aesthetically?

The question still remains as to whether the three monkeys are an image or if they are something else. Some the three monkeys have a specific form, e.g. a bronze figure, a book cover of a woodcut, a painted wood relief, a linocut postcard and a colour drawing in a newspaper [Ill. 20.7]. The materials vary from bronze to paper to wood, but are the styles different?

The rather realistic bronze figure is quite small, produced in a typi-

cal tourist souvenir manner and easily recognisable as the three monkeys. The book cover woodcut is slightly flat, the white marks indicating the fur and face but not in a way that looks as natural as the little bronze figure. Both lack personality, perhaps indicating the limited amount of thought put into the design other than lining up the monkeys as expected.

Produced in the 1700s, the third example in Ill. 20.7 is filled with colour, life and humour. In contrast to the first two examples, the monkeys are especially lifelike and quite distinct from the other examples in that they are not posed close together facing forward in a straight row; for instance one of them is sitting sideways. Initially I came to the conclusion that the image had not yet become a stereotype in the 18th century, but later learned that their poses are common in the Japanese tradition.

A simple white linocut with a black background, the fourth example, while not a masterpiece, is in no way a stereotypical version of the three monkeys. Although facing forward and in a line, the monkeys have become women and the intent of the image is highly political, like much art at that time. The fifth example is a colour drawing of Uncle Sam, who symbolises the American government. The image is naturalistic and employs the same colours used in the image of Uncle Sam during World War I. Once a positive symbol of the American government, it has come to be considered propaganda and has taken on negative connotations. Turning Uncle Sam into the three monkeys is tantamount to saying America has become blind to other ways of seeing the world than its own.

Are they just pictures?

Picturing one particular image of the Mona Lisa is easy, but recalling exact details of the setting and how she holds her hands is more of a challenge. If you try to picture her right now, what position is she in, what is her facial expression? With the see-no-evil, hear-no-evil, speak-no-evil monkeys, coming up with an image is instantaneous, but the image is not a universal one, just the conceptual idea. To illustrate, consider American concept artist Joseph Kosuth's famous, *One and Three Chairs*, which comprises a sign hanging on the wall of an enlarged definition from a dictionary of the word 'chair'; an actual chair in the foreground; and a life-size photograph of the chair, also hanging on the wall. When the piece is exhibited the actual chair, the photograph of the chair and the dictionary the definition comes from change, but the conceptual idea, the starting point, remains the same. As Hapkemeyer and Weismair explain, "The expression was in the idea, not in the form – the forms were only a device in the service of the idea" (1997:135).

The various renditions of the three monkeys in my collection are something different than art. They are pictures, but they are also more than pictures. They are objects that represent cultural waste or a residue, a hotchpotch. But along comes the reluctant collector with a trained eye.

Disinclined to fill the world with more and more stuff, I take comfort in that fact that artefacts and physical objects fortunately can be digitised.

The three monkeys are signs, a conceptual structure and not physically bound pictures. The minute this mental concept even slightly enters the public sphere it cannot help but take on a material form, including words. Perhaps this is also why we have trouble seeing the image of the three monkeys, or any image. We see through the image and into the conceptual idea.

Notes

- 1 <http://akira.ruc.dk/~bruno/Ingemann/3Monkeys.html>

Chapter 21: Object images and material culture – The construction of authenticity and meaning

Objects from daily life can be seen as tokens of culture and society but often they end up as garbage. What decides whether an object stays defined as rubbish or whether it is elevated to the category of valuable object filled with authenticity and meaning? How does this transformation take place and why do the majority of objects remain relegated to the dark shadows of oblivion?

Objects from daily life can tell a story and telling the story contributes to creating meaning. For example, the son of some good friends has a toy spirit stove that can actually be used to cook. The boy's mother is a petite, talkative redhead. Eagerly engaged in conversation with her daughter one day in the kitchen, her little son, who is playing with the stove, comes running in from his room. He stands patiently and waits, and waits, and waits.

Suddenly his mother jumps up and shouts, "Is that smoke?" She rushes into her son's room and the curtains are on fire. She quickly puts out the fire, ascertains that there is not much damage and begins wildly shouting at her son: "Why didn't you say anything?" The boy quietly replied, "Mom, it's not polite to interrupt".

The little toy stove in the story is an expression of material culture in 1960's Denmark, or what I call an *object image*. I have used this physical object to create a mental image closely linked to this brief story. From a museological perspective, the question must be asked as to whether this toy will ever make it into a museum. If the boy in the story were, say, Frederik, the Crown Prince of Denmark, then it might happen. Otherwise it is not certain that it ever would. How do museums create authenticity and meaning and how do objects become valuable?

Rubbish!

I went to the library to find a book called *Rubbish*, which I will touch upon later, but discovered another book also called *Rubbish!* by William Rathje and Cullen Murphy. The latter book was shelved in an entirely different place under redevelopment plans and is my main point of departure for this chapter.

Our private worlds basically consist of two realities, a mental one comprised of our beliefs, attitudes and ideas, and a material one containing physical objects. The book, *Rubbish!*, is not about waste or Stone Age kitchen middens but today's waste heaps. The study of human refuse and trash is a field of research known as garbology, which involves collecting, sorting and categorising tonnes upon tonnes of waste. The fundamental dogma of garbology is that what people have owned and thrown away speaks more eloquently, informatively and credibly about the lives they lived than perhaps they themselves could do (Rathje & Murphy 1992:54). Rathje and Murphy explain that much can be read from consumer waste,

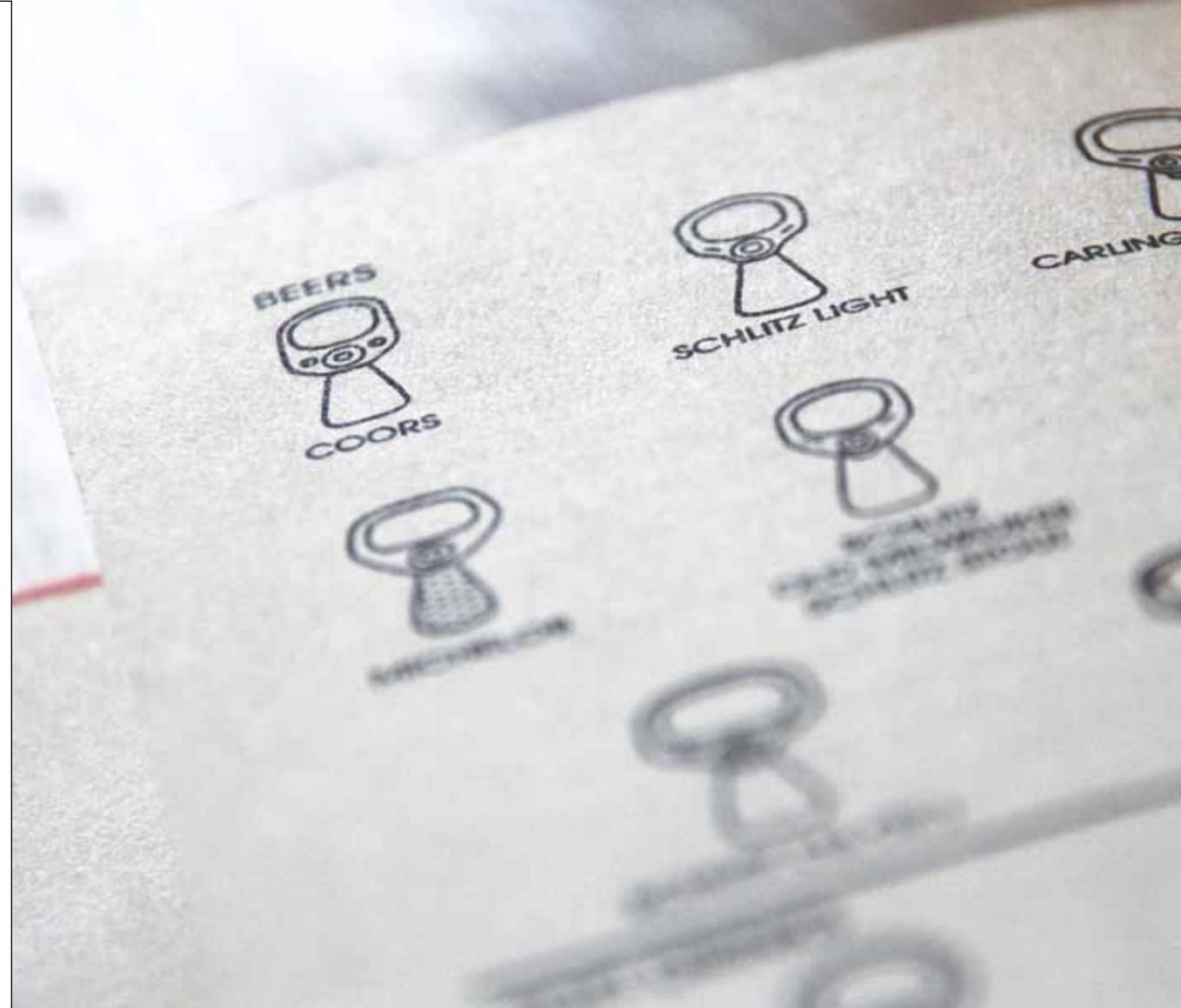
You can tell what kind of wine they drink. All their letters come in and out, and who they buy through - Saks or Sears and Roebuck - and how they maintain their household. It's better'n being a psychiatrist. I can tell you anything you want to know (1992:55).

The assumption that behaviour is reflected in the artefact - or the absence of artefacts - is fundamental to the study of what archaeologists call 'material culture'. Studying material culture expressed through physical artefacts (from waste in garbage cans to paintings on walls) helps us not only to define a given moment, but also to transform the definition of that moment over time. Microwave dinners and McDonald's hamburgers reflect not only a new level of diversity in work and family, but they also contribute to that diversity.

In garbology, the sheer quantity and variety of waste involved automatically entails dividing it into multiple categories in order to ascribe significance to the waste. Rathje and Murphy explain that a 044 code, which is for potato peels, means the item can be weighed in bulk instead of counting it (1992:22).

When the can disappears and the pull tabs are left

Along the way the Garbage Project encountered what turned out to be a temporary obstacle when beer and soft drink cans began being recycled. Fortunately a clever researcher discovered that while the cans got recycled the little pull tabs were still being thrown in the trash. He subsequently made a typology, or what I call an object image, to categorise which brands households consumed [Ill. 21.1]. Digging through 20 years



Ill: 21.1: The Garbage Project works with highly detailed categories to sort and weigh garbage to form a factual foundation for the interpretation of findings. Small items like pull tabs can be used to determine what brands and the amount of beverages a household consumes.

of waste, garbologists were able to use pull tabs to pinpoint the archaeological layers. Coors beer cans, for example had one specific pull tab from March 1974 to June 1977, thus helping to date the various layers.

Results of garbage studies

What are the benefits of doing waste studies? In one projects researchers examined the weekly waste from selected households. They simultaneously asked each household to record all purchases and then compared the waste with the purchases to see if they fit together. This project demonstrated the *good provider syndrome*, which means that people buy far more than their waste reflects. The amount of purchases presumably shows how well stocked people are with the necessities of life. People generally under-reported the amount of soft drinks, cakes, chocolate and fat they bought and over-reported the amount of fruit and sugar-free soda they bought, to which Rathje and Murphy stated, “It is a sad catalogue of self-delusion”.

Waste and museums

In 1989 the artist Robert Richardson created a Garbage Museum designed to make visitors feel that America was on the verge of being engulfed by garbage. Stacked with waste from floor to ceiling, visitors walked through a well-lit tunnel of jumbled waste. Many visitors undoubtedly equated what they saw with the level of waste in America in general, i.e. an endless number of empty laundry detergent boxes, plastic jugs, Styrofoam cartons, disposable diapers, bottles, cans and fast food packaging. Rathje and Murphy, who believe that this popular perception of waste did not fully correspond with reality, describe what a local waste collector would say if he visited the exhibition and had to evaluate how the waste he handled every day differed Richardson’s construction.

First, there is no dirt mixed in with the waste, which is not the case with genuine everyday waste in a landfill. Nor is there building waste and debris, food waste or garden waste, not to mention soaked newspapers and sludge. Moreover there is much more plastic and considerably less paper at the museum compared to a landfill, where waste is compressed. The absence of both compacted waste and the unmistakable stench of rotting garbage also reflects how the exhibition deviates from reality.

Rathje and Murphy find that a gap exists between the myths about waste and reality and that visitors receive a distorted picture of reality that further validates the misinformation they already possess. Their own misconceptions confirmed, visitors fail to gain new insights and believe what they see, because they are presented with, “... a closed system of fantasy and short-sightedness that both hampers the effective disposal of garbage and leads to exaggerated fears of a garbage crises” (Rathje & Murphy 1992:84).

Ill. 21.2: The famous Gundestrup cauldron at the National Museum of Denmark.



Constructing authenticity

Rathje and Murphy’s implicit and explicit criticism of the Garbage Museum is a matter of authenticity. In order to define what authentic means, it is also important to look at what is not authentic. Housed at the Danish National Museum is the famous Gundestrup cauldron [Ill. 21.2]. Found buried in a peat bog near the hamlet of Gundestrup in Northern Jutland, the cauldron is part of the material legacy of Danish prehistory. Indisputably an authentic and valuable artefact from the past, it represents the culture of the 1st century BC. The local museum in Gundestrup has a detailed replica of the cauldron. Traditionally, this copy would not be considered authentic as it was produced in the nineteenth century and not in ancient times. Thus the issue of authenticity is based on the origin of an object and how it was produced.

Rathje and Murphy's critique of the Garbage Museum does not concern whether the objects are authentic or not or whether the various plastic paraphernalia and glass bottles are dated correctly, but whether the exhibition is an authentically coherent expression of the facts. Their answer is a resounding no. They believe that although authentic items are used, the context is not comprehensive enough; hence visitors experience an inadequate naturalistic representation of reality. Their inventory of what a waste collector would find lacking shows how the context of the exhibition does not present the 'right' narrative.

Rathje and Murphy's scathing criticism derives from their notion of what is authentic, which goes beyond the authenticity of just the objects to encompass the context, the narrative the objects and the texts create, their relationship to one another and the overall coherency of the presentation of the objects and texts. Authentic artefacts can be used to lie, but the truth can also be told with inauthentic objects. For example, the Workers' Museum in Copenhagen has an installation that shows nineteenth century working class families picnicking in the woods and having a good time. The beer bottles, plates, cutlery, accordion and clothing are perhaps authentic, but the mannequins, like the scenery, have been artificially constructed to appear authentic and to create a specific atmosphere (Floris & Vasström 1999:77). The emphasis is on replicating an authentic contemporary experience in the 1800s via the installation's design. The criteria for authenticity do not solely revolve around the objects, but the way they must be experienced. In other words, having an authentic experience is as equally important as properly presenting the object with the correct provenience.

The American museologist Lisa C. Roberts believes that there is no need to cherish the objects and that focusing on a realistic experience is the most important goal (1997:99). Robert's deliberations involve the semiotic landscape and narrative in which significance lies not in the object itself, but in what the external signs add to the object regarding the perception of authenticity and purpose. The visitor can experience the object, but what determines authenticity is not the object itself or the individual visitor; it is also the setting in which the object is placed and which the visitor can experience.

How do visitors experience exhibitions?

Museums are like a picture frozen in time. Objects are placed in a context in a particular room and frozen in a given time. It may be the 1930s or it could be the 1960s. An exhibition can be so deeply frozen that visitors have difficulty thawing it. Or it can be only lightly frozen, allowing visitors to easily thaw it.

Visitors approach an exhibition with what I call an aesthetic gaze and have a wide-ranging aesthetic experience comprised of four ele-

ments: values, emotions, knowledge and action. The aesthetic experience goes far beyond the concept of beauty. In order for something to support the aesthetic experience of visitors it must affirm the insights these *four fields of experience* offer, as well as something that challenges visitors and then adds something new and surprising (Gjedde & Ingemann 2008:115). The four fields of experience can be activated but how they are activated is also highly dependent on the visitors' goals. The museum has responsibility for planning and activating one or more of the fields of experience.

This construction of experience fields can be practiced more or less adequately and the visitor must be actively open to the exhibition by searching for *relations*. In a project on democracy (see chapter 9), an informant named Anne walks around with a friend, Rikke, at an exhibition at the Museum of Copenhagen, which focuses on Copenhagen in the 1930s and the 1960s.

Anne creates a number of relationships, but I have chosen to focus on *recognition relations*, which involve objects that arouse a strong feeling of recognition. Things are nothing in themselves, but when Anne links them to her own personal experiences it also allows her to unpack personal memories and experiences. For example, upon seeing a Nilfisk vacuum cleaner in the display about homes in the 1930s, Anne says, "I remember those. My grandmother and grandfather had one just like it". Sometimes she also connects sensory experiences to what she recognises. For example, when she picks up a black rotary phone from the 1960s, she exclaims, "Oh, my grandmother and grandfather still have a phone like this. And the receiver is exactly this heavy. It's a cool receiver to have actually". She recognises many objects in the part of the exhibition covering the 1960s and 1970s. She has forgotten that some of the objects exist until they catch her eye. For example, when she sees the Karoline cow, she says, "I can remember that. We also had that when I was a kid".

But recognition is elevated beyond mere registration and is closely tied to personal experiences. She makes the following comment when she sees a penguin moneybox and a bankbook, "Those bank accounts! I remember how proud I was the first time I gave the teller my bankbook". But there are two items that really ignite her memory. One is a showcase displaying numerous old toys. Whooping with excitement Anne and Rikke exclaim, "No, no I also had ... that lunchbox. You can still get them today". The other object is Carmen Curlers, which truly brings back memories, "... my mother had some. Do you know how much hair I lost trying to roll those into my hair? It always got so tangled that I nearly lost half my hair trying to cut out the knots".

The objects works as *cues* that help Anne talk about what she sees and thus remember experiences and stories from her own life. The entire exhibition is a narrative about past decades, telling visitors much they

already know. The various objects, texts, photographs and sounds bring back memories of Anne's personal story, serving as an opportunity to recall memories, experiences and knowledge from her personal life.

Anne's aesthetic experience is made up of the four fields of experience but also her own concrete experiences. Going back to the discussion of authenticity, there is the implicit notion that authenticity is linked to what one experiences, i.e. Anne can associate what she sees, hears and feels with her personal life. Consequently she accepts experiences that are good as being authentic and authentic means something she recognises from her own life experiences (see chapter 9).

Construction of value and importance

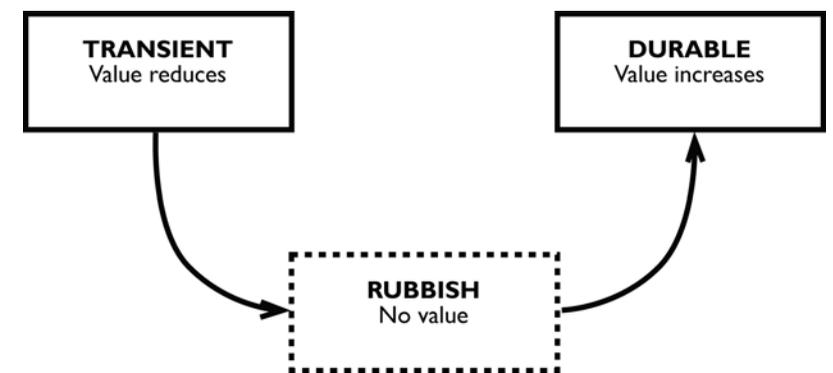
In the present everything can be collected, recorded and categorised. If you want to preserve the material culture then it is important to find out what values determine whether or not something has meaning. The Garbage Project for example attributes meaning to daily waste, which it records and categorises, but the goal is not to preserve it for posterity or to exhibit it, with the exception of the Garbage Museum. The first library book I was searching for, presents sociocultural theory on how things are ascribed value, or rather that the value assigned to things is a constant, ongoing process.

The sociologist Michael Thompson's book, *Rubbish Theory*, identifies two completely different ways of looking at objects, which are one aspect of our perception of our physical and social environment and our worldview. Thompson explains that in our culture, objects are attributed to one of two broad categories. They are either *transient* or *durable* (1979:7). Objects in the *transient* category lose value over time and have a finite lifespan, e.g. as is the case with used cars. As time passes, they become less and less valuable. Objects in the *durable* category in contrast gain value over time that ideally lasts indefinitely, e.g. as is the case with a Louise Seize chair from the 1700s.

But Thompson does not believe that objects have inherent qualities that determine whether they are transient or durable. Instead, the category they belong to is an expression of one's worldview, i.e. a social construction. Some people have the power to define objects as durable and other things as transient (Thompson 1979:9).

The paradoxical question must be asked as to how a self-repairing system of this nature can ever transform? Thompson comes to the conclusion that the answer is that the two general categories do not cover the entire universe of objects. There are some objects (with zero or unchanged value), which do not fall into one of these two categories, and they account for a third, hidden category: rubbish [Ill. 21.3].

His hypothesis is that this hidden rubbish category is not subject to the same verification mechanisms and thus represents an opportunity



Ill. 21.3: Michael Thompson rejects the simple dualism between objects of growing value being in the durable category and objects of declining value being in the transient category. As a result he developed a third category, rubbish, where items can remain of no value for years only to be reallocated value by institutions and persons.

for transient objects to make the seemingly impossible move to the durable objects category (Thompson 1979:9). He believes that once an object diminishes in value and slides into the category of rubbish, it will not disappear and will not turn into dust. It continues to exist in a timeless and valueless universe waiting for an opportunity to be re-discovered. Thompson presents a specific example of this movement through the three categories.

In 1879, Thomas Stevens manufactured and sold colourful woven silk-pictures depicting e.g. Dick Turin's ride to York on his good horse Black Bess and the stagecoach between London and York. In 1879 these pictures, known as Stevengraphs, cost a shilling; in 1950 they were impossible to sell; and in 1971 they cost 75 pounds each. What is the explanation behind this change in value? Thompson describes three stages:

1) Original value of one shilling. The object's value declined over time, thus putting it in the transient category.

2) Long interim period. The object's value was zero and it did not increase or decrease over time, thus putting it in the rubbish category.

3) In about 1960 Stevengraph's began gaining value and continue to do so today, thus putting them in the durable category (Thompson 1979:18).

Moving from the category of being rubbish to being permanent took place in 1960, at which point exhibitions were held and articles written about Stevengraphs. When they became a topic for journalists and later

scholars, they became visible and consequently gained greater economic value, which also increased their aesthetic value.

Rubbish theory and museum objects

The largest known example of European Iron Age silver work, the Gundestrup cauldron, a unique find decorated with Celtic stories and myths that presumably dates back to the 1st century BC, was in the durable category from the moment it was discovered.¹ But do plastic, glass and packaging from the 1960s have value? It has no economic value. Since the moment they were purchased they were in the transient category and literally landed in the rubbish category with no value when driven away as waste to be dumped in a landfill. However when artist Robert Richardson created the Garbage Museum, these seemingly worthless objects entered the durable category upon being displayed. The musealisation of the objects gives them value, i.e. someone has ascribed them value; thus they become durable.

When an object becomes part of a museum's collection, removing it again is nearly impossible. The 1960s toy stove described at the beginning of this chapter exists in the thousands, but it generally belongs to the rubbish category and has zero value. The minute the Museum of Copenhagen decides to do an exhibition on the 1960s that has a section on the home, and thus also on children's toys, then my toy stove (or a similar one) will be allocated value and enter the durable category. As a result, the museum and the exhibition determine which objects are given value.

The toy stove is not just a toy stove but an expression of material culture and thus it is used in this context to tell a story of objects as symbolic expressions of consumer culture, economic growth and abundance - and hence the material progress that has occurred since the 1930s. Museums do not create the economic value, they create the symbolic value.

The gap

Object images reflect how objects are used to represent ideas, stories and myths about the past as they are frozen in the museum's installation of objects, the context, the text and the staging, all of which to a great extent determine how much meaning and authenticity visitors construct. Objects are the material culture's mental imagery, visible as images and as unseen entities. In order to allow the visitor to create meaning, it is necessary to create a gap between the object and the visitor, just like the pause the little boy in the introductory story was waiting for.

Notes

1 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gundestrup_cauldron

Chapter 22: Ten theses on the museum in society

The foundation for this chapter was laid in 2000, a year significant not because of its symbolic value but because this is the year I was part of a museological network that discussed the relationship between authentic objects, society and communication. I contributed to a clarification of the topic by introducing the idea of focusing more on visitors and users, pointing out how essential establishing communication with and between them is for museums to play a role in society. The following list summarises the concepts introduced:

1. Museums tell stories using authentic objects.
2. Authentic objects are presented in a new context.
3. Objects can shape an aesthetic experience.
4. "Texts" and visitors create aesthetic experiences.
5. Objects represent artistic expression, a narrative.
6. A narrative must be able to create mental images.
7. The narratives in society build upon myths and symbols.
8. Museums communicate the narratives in society.
9. Museums are in society.
10. Society is in museums.

The ten theses on this list are central. Collecting, documenting, preserving, disseminating etc. are important activities for museums to engage in, but it is also important to look at the museum's role in society from a dissemination perspective. For casual visitors, this means the museum must consider them not only as a consumer to be satisfied, but particularly as a partner in dialogue. And even more so as partner to be respected and taken seriously. Below, I will briefly expand on each of the ten theses statements to further clarify the museum's role in society.

I. Museums tell stories using authentic objects

1.1) I have chosen to focus on history museums, which covers everything from small local ones and the National Museum of Denmark to 'non-museums' such as the Land of Legends Lejre, where archaeological experiments are conducted.

1.2) The term *authentic* is tricky. On the one hand, it is used to describe unique objects, their correct provenience and age; for example the highly valuable Nordic Bronze Age Trundholm sun chariot. Danish museum inspector Annette Vasström (1999) extends the notion of focusing on objects alone to cover what she calls an *authentic 'mood'*.

1.3) Defining 'authentic' as value-free is problematic as it is often bound to a material culture, which means that other cultures may have a completely different idea of what matters. It is not the objects themselves that are authentic, but that which can be repeated. Shinto temples in Japan are razed every 20 years only to be rebuilt and the new buildings are as authentic as the old ones. Their authenticity lies in using traditional building techniques and maintaining ancient skills.

1.4) The Danish scenographer and exhibition designer Anne Sofie Becker (1990) makes a distinction between presentative and discursive exhibitions. *Presentative* objects are exhibited as they are with many 'empty spaces' that need to be completed by the visitor. The *discursive* type establishes "... homogeneous orders, coherent closed systems, which individual parts must always obey and comply with the whole ..." (1990:81).

1.5) The concept of the presentative/discursive dichotomy creates both clarity and confusion. Discursive exhibitions are not solely limited to one order or system, but can possibly contain narratives told in many different ways and with a variety of intentions. Although objects are what make museums unique, it is also crucial that they can tell stories.

1.6) Objects are the crown jewel of museums. Even if visitors put emphasis on tests and images, they still primarily expect to see objects. Just the fact that the objects *are* there is a gesture of kindness (Gjedde & Ingemann 2008).

2. Authentic objects are presented in a new context

2.1) Regardless of whether it is a utilitarian or cult object, a cultural object has a life of its own. It can be used differently than was originally intended and be placed in a new time and in a new setting and also be given a new function. Michael Baxendall (1991:34) describes how three cultures come together in an exhibition. First there are the ideas, values and intentions inherent in the culture in which the artefact was created. Second there is the combination of ideas, values and intentions inherent in the culture and the curator who organised the exhibition. Finally there is the beholder, who possesses distinct cultural baggage comprising a set of unsystematic ideas, values and intentions. Braxendall presents an

example in which a Mbulu Ngulu mask presumably inspired Picasso's 1907 painting *Les Femmes d'Alger*. He stresses that, "... the effect of visual similarity is to accent difference" (Braxendall 1991:40).

2.2) Susan Vogel underlines that, "Almost nothing displayed in museums was made to be seen in them. Museums provide an experience of most of the world's art and artefacts that does not bear even the remotest resemblance to what their makers intended" (1991:191). She believes that most museum visitors are totally unaware of this fact but that this is an issue museum professionals should focus on.

2.3) In 1917 Marcel Duchamp tried to exhibit his now famous *Fountain*, a mass-produced urinal signed 'R. Mutt', in a gallery. This subversive action initiated a discussion of whether the work was original and authentic or whether it was the context that determined whether what was being exhibited was to be seen as authentic art. Of particular interest is the fact that he did not get the idea by looking at a urinal in use, but from a J. L. Mott Ironworks display window on Fifth Avenue in New York. The issue here is the change in context for the item exhibited. Even in the Mott's display window the urinal had been lifted out of the context it was designed to be used in.

3. Objects can shape an aesthetic experience

3.1) The initial processing of any exhibition takes place on a purely aesthetic level. This means that the exhibition paves the way for an aesthetic gaze and not just the object as it does not necessarily possess the power to be read aesthetically. How the object is staged determines the level at which the aesthetic gaze comes into play. The aesthetic gaze is a quest to see e.g. what is beautiful, pleasing, peculiar, picturesque, tasteful and flattering – as well as a to experience a sense of recognition – in the manner described by Danish sculptor and theoretician Willy Ørskov (1966:67).

3.2) The Swedish art historian Peter Cornell writes in his book, *Saker. Om tings synlighet* [*Things: On the visibility of things*], that the museum is the laboratory of visibility. As a zone of visibility, the museum encourages ferocious yet affectionate contemplation. In the encounter with the object in the museum, rich, detailed languages are provided. While the visitor stands outside, the museum is curiously silent towards the lifeworld of everyday things as if their form and presence are irrelevant and meaningless. Cornell believes that it is through the eyes of the philosopher, poet and artist, or through the eyes of a child, that things become visible again. They get the objects to speak and they get us to talk about things, e.g. wax tablecloths, kitchen utensils, laundry, clocks, stairs or a glass of water (1993:10). I think however that Peter Cornell is overly friendly; even objects in a museum can be experienced as irrelevant and

meaningless and require an open gaze to make them visible again or visible for the first time.

3.3) The authentic object is seen as a contrast to imitations, copies, fakes. Authentic objects are inextricably tied to their physicality, production, materials and use. Sociologist Dean MacCannell believes that non-authentic objects create a unifying consciousness that defines the modern spirit. The quest for authenticity consequently depends on the sense of instability and non-authenticity which characterises the modern consciousness. MacCannell has changed the criterion of authenticity away from the object itself to the way it is experienced! In other words, having an authentic experience is as equally important as the artefacts being properly presented and having the correct provenience. From this perspective, no distinction should be made between imitation and reality. The truth lies somewhere in between in what can be called simulation. The American museologist Lisa C. Roberts asks the question, "... if the experience is properly simulated - in other words, if the correct effect is reproduced in the lived body - does it matter that the props are 'faked'?" (1997:99). Roberts' deliberations touch on the semiotic landscape and narrative. The significance lies not in the object itself, but in what the external signs add to the object, a stance that further supports MacCannell's view of authenticity and objects. The viewer can experience the object, but what determines authenticity is not solely the object or even the viewer, but also the setting in which the viewer experiences the object.

4. "Texts" and visitors create aesthetic experiences

4.1) An aesthetic experience is however something far more comprehensive than just the concept of beauty and comprises four fields of experience: values, emotions, knowledge and action. In order for something to support the aesthetic experience of visitors it must affirm the insights these four fields of experience offer, as well as something that challenges visitors and then adds something new and surprising (Gjedde & Ingemann 2008:115-120). The four fields of experience can be activated but how they are activated is also highly dependent on the visitors' goals, i.e. are they seeking pure entertainment, to pass the time or informal learning. The museum has responsibility for planning and activating one or more of the fields of experience.

4.2) Stanley Fish (1980) believes 'texts' (i.e., objects, spaces, images, written texts) simply do not exist, while Edwina Taborsky (1990) believes that 'text' is constructed in a social context. When the visitor meets the exhibition as text meaning is created.

5. Objects represent artistic expression, a narrative

5.1) Aesthetics is perhaps a simple, easy bridge between objects and the visitor, but it is also a fairly small bridge if the museum wants to con-

vey something that can access the unconscious of visitors and encourage them to talk about their insights. For objects to be talked about the museum must contextualise them in a way that makes reading the objects, space, course, and texts as a conscious narrative possible.

5.2) A story must contain six elements and answer certain questions: a summary: What is it all about?; an introduction: Who, What, Where and When?; development: What happened next?; an evaluation: What is the value?; and a solution: What happened in the end? A narrative structure is involved, but there is also the use of images and emotive language (Gjedde & Ingemann 2008:36).

5.3) A narrative is more than just part of the 'text'; people intrinsically translate experiences and understand them as internal narratives. This means that even when a text lacks a narrative structure we have a tendency to talk about our personal experience in a narrative structure (Gjedde & Ingemann 2008:36).

5.4) The Museum of Copenhagen has a showcase displaying a road-kill hedgehog, a cell phone, a credit card and a set of car keys. This somewhat absurd combination of objects from daily life on the highway is accompanied by a dry, laconic text that declares, "Nature must give way to roads. The distance between work and home is becoming bigger". The designer has attempted to create a narrative that contains 'empty spaces' to be filled in by the visitor while simultaneously bringing into play values, emotions and knowledge that the visitor will recognise and agree or disagree with, thus representing a significant creative activity.

6. A narrative must be able to create mental images

6.1) Objects and texts create mental images as internal images for the visitor. The aforementioned display at the Museum of Copenhagen is one way of creating mental images. The individual parts function as a metonym for something bigger, and the ironic distance in the text combined with the objects creates a complex mental image. All of the elements are concurrently used symbolically to tell a certain story.

6.2) The precondition for creating mental images is an emphasis on narrative and applying language techniques drawn from fiction. A collision must occur between objects and texts to create a total mental image.

7. The narratives in society build upon myths and symbols

7.1) The Worker's Museum in Copenhagen has an exhibition on the 1950s depicting the living conditions of a working class family in the years after World War II. There are authentic material objects from a specific time and culture. Although genuine, the objects are also used to create a myth about progress and prosperity. The French semiotician Roland

Barthes likens the shift between seeing things in themselves and seeing the myth to looking out the window at the landscape while driving a car. One's eyes can look at the landscape or they can rest on the window. The glass can be the focus of one's attention, causing the landscape to recede into the distance or the glass can be transparent, causing the landscape to tread into the foreground. Altering one's gaze between the two is constant. The glass is at once present and then suddenly empty and meaningless, while the landscape takes on depth only to suddenly become unreal (Barthes 1957/1972:124).

7.2) Myths are stories a culture uses to explain and understand aspects of reality or nature. Primitive myths are often about life and death, gods and good and evil. Modern sophisticated myths are about e.g. masculinity and femininity, family, success, time and science.

7.3) The Worker's Museum does in their 1950s exhibition expresses a myth telling a story about speed and time and is a symbolic expression of self-centred values and the desire to have vs. to be (Fromm 1976/1981).

7.4) No culture has universal myths, though some myths are dominant. Contra-myths and the transformation of myths undergo an evolutionary process in which related parts or concepts are displaced and others are added.

7.5) Jung sees traditional myths (e.g. Oedipus, Orpheus and Eurydice) as mythological motifs, finding myths with many corresponding features in various cultures. Jung discusses the importance of myths as analogies and in his theory of the collective unconscious and archetypes explains that, "They are without known origin; and they can reproduce themselves in any time and any place of the world" (Jung 1994:69).

8. Museums communicate the narratives of society

8.1) Society's stories are highly complexity, which means multiple narratives are possible. Small local history museums can have a close relationship with visitors, thus allowing them to disseminate information and construct history in a manner that is exceedingly visitor-focused. At major museums, which are in principle meant for everyone, this strategy is perhaps not possible. They can however be authoritative and sender-focused, which means they must create community narratives.

8.2) Society's stories are created in a complicated dance between writers, the mass media and researchers. Since museum professionals, of which there are 600 in Denmark, cannot create or construct the right stories alone, they must find and recruit zealous yet sensitive people to point out the main aspects of the history of society that looks at the new and the familiar and especially the balance between them.

9. Museums are in society

9.1) The introduction to this chapter states that the ten theses state-

ments cannot cover all museums, for example art museums. After re-consideration, the ten statements are relevant to art museums but would require some rewriting and additional discussion as they are not as innocent or neutral as they may appear.

9.2) The American museologist Elaine Heumann Gurian believes that in the future museums will not be defined by their objects, but by the setting and "... storytelling in tangible sensory form, ... where citizenry can congregate in a spirit of cross-generational inclusivity and inquiry into memory of our past, a forum for our present, and aspirations for our future" (1999:65).

9.3) The British museologist Davis Anderson believes the museum's role is to teach visitors how to tap into their ability to feel and think. To support his argument, he quotes the 1994 Swedish parliamentary commission for museums:

There are those who claim that museums are mostly for fun, or that preservation of artefacts from the past is an end in itself. We argue that museums are in the service of society and consequently must offer both learning and entertainment, but the single most important objective of memory is to help us to learn, as individuals in society (1997: xii).

9.4) The American museologist John Falk sees the museum in the highly individualised world of lifelong learning, stating that "... as free-choice learning comes to represent an ever greater percentage of the total learning an individual does in his or her lifetime, museums promise to become ever more important and ever more accepted as vital links within the educational infrastructure of the community" (1999:273). Whether this happens will depend on how the museum chooses to play this role.

9.5) A central goal for example at the Worker's Museum is to create *recognition*. The visitor must be able to recognise objects and settings as their own. Thus *nostalgia* and *recognition* are part of the central museum's objectives (Floris & Vasström 1999).

9.6) The American philosopher Albert William Levi (1995:344) lists the different institutional roles of the museum as:

- a storehouse,
- a showcase and guardian of the aesthetically valuable in society, and
- an indispensable instrument in the great task of shaping people.

Moreover he looks at four different strategies museums can choose in which the museum is:

- a collection of unique works designed to give aesthetic pleasure,
- an agent of cultural history,

- an advocate for museological disciplines, and
- a humanistic institution that emphasises communication (form and content), continuity (tradition) and social criticism.

10. Society is in museums

10.1) Can the community find aspects of its reality represented in the museum? This is the case in a direct way at e.g. the Worker's Museum. Is this also possible at the National Museum of Denmark, where the distance between the visitor's personal reality and the museum's presentation of reality is perhaps so great that nostalgia and recognition should not be a driving force? Because the goals and purpose of museums can vary, it is important that the personal reality of visitors can be connected to something greater than just recognising objects and spaces. It is essential that visitors relate to relevant, understandable symbols and myths.

10.2) When society is defocused and individualised and values are relative, it directly affects the culture and subsequently the museum. Perhaps telling one universal story is not possible, but telling many minor stories is a valid alternative. A discursive approach means following more than just one coherent narrative. Like the postmodern media, the museum can also create personalised, interactive narratives. One prerequisite for doing so is to activate the whole field of experience and incorporate minor narratives that generate recognition and comprise emotive language and mental pictures that draw on powerful symbols and myths.

Chapter 23: Non-art and self-creation in the art gallery

At art galleries young new visitors are of course met by the art, but also communication about the art in the form of labels, text, folders etc. This chapter focuses on three main areas: how this communication defines the visitor as a somewhat passive recipient of information; how the visitor performatively involves herself to construct her identity using the exhibition and the artist as part of the creation of identity; and how the visitor creates communication in the art gallery. This leads to a discussion of the conflict that arises between curators and visitors.

How do art galleries meet 'young new' visitors? How do museums think about the communication surrounding the artworks? Who has the necessary knowledge and authority? Will the self-creation and self-experience that arises with young new visitors create new opportunities and alter the circumstances that currently clearly mark the division between art and the communication surrounding art? How do young new visitors encounter the museum? How can museums meet the challenge of receiving these visitors?

(I) ... I am the recipient of information

In November 2007 when I was visiting the art museum ARoS in Aarhus, Denmark, I had my new cell phone along and at one point I saw something exceptionally outstanding and snapped a picture. The whir of my cell phone's artificial shutter, which I had not yet learned to shut off, alerted a security guard who, after immediately appearing from around the corner dressed in black, asked: "You didn't just take a picture, did you?" Caught red-handed with my cell phone, I told a white-lie, explaining that I had just received a text message. In reality, I had perhaps just taken an illegal photo [Ill. 23.1].

It was not the middle-aged woman that I found worthy of note, but

rather what was happening where she stood. And where I stood. Standing in separate silver rings painted on the floor, we heard a soft, charming female voice speaking English with a typical Japanese accent. The voice narrated, "In 1997 I went to the Kumano forest to reach the Nachi Waterfall. I walked for twelve hours and on my way I had a series of magical and supernatural experiences which I portrayed in the picture *Kumano*."¹

It was exhilarating to see that this art gallery obviously no longer observed the traditional form of reverence demarcating artwork as a unique, sacrosanct work. In this instance the artist was present, telling about herself, her work process and the exceedingly complex, strange symbols that occur in her works.

Her narrative about *Kumano* helps us become familiar with the mirror as a cultural symbol and explains how her hairstyle is inspired by Buddhism and Chinese emperors. We learn about the Buddhist temple Yumedono, which she first encountered in a dream while walking in the woods, where she came upon a temple with a golden room.

Astonishingly, in this art gallery the artist is allowed to turn to us as visitors, providing us with numerous *entrances* to her work, enhancing our experience and contributing to making us as visitors privy to the universe of the artist. The atypical aspect of this approach is what makes it particularly surprising. This artist has a desire to communicate in a variety of different ways with her audience.

Consequently, the exhibition is remarkably challenging. There were three silver rings situated in front of each piece of artwork that provided access to different kinds of information. The idiolect in this exhibition comprises three rings, one in which Mariko Mori tells about her working process; one where she identifies and explains cultural symbols; and one where she explains the work itself in more detail.

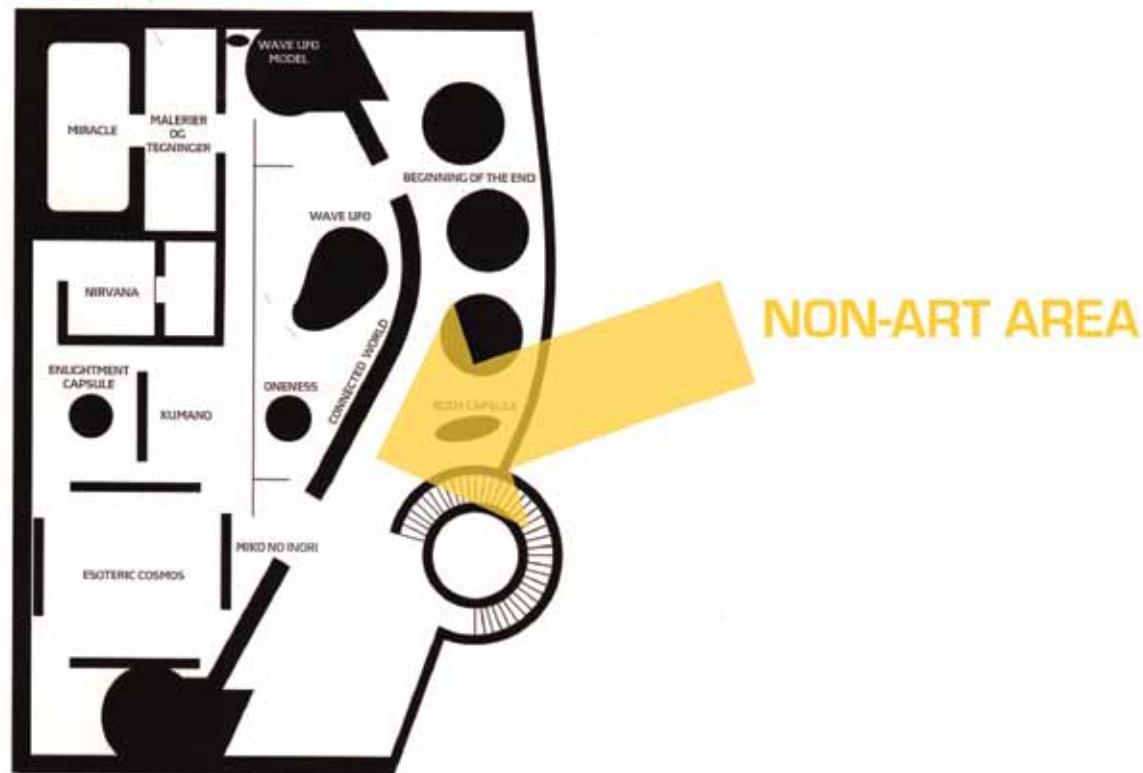
At this point I was unawares as to the inversion that awaited me. Outside the exhibition there was also something completely new, a NON-ART AREA [Ill. 23.2].

The area, so conspicuously different, is not even represented on the map on the back of the museum folder showing the layout of Mariko Mori's entire exhibition. Another peculiarity is that the room housing the non-art area also contains a number of the now familiar silver rings that are obviously meant to challenge your body and movements to teach you something. If you step on the silver rings then the pictures on a plasma screen change. There are banners that contain large amounts of text, but there is no artist describing herself or her work. In this area, it is another voice of knowledge that speaks and is particularly mediating.

This is confusing. In the art space it is obviously the artist Mariko Mori who emphatically and poetically extends and creates various entrances into her work. The three silver rings that allow visitors to activate the sound are a phenomenally simple and elegant concept of mediating.



Ill. 23.1: Clandestine photo of Mariko Mori's extensive photo manipulation, *Kumano*, at left. Note especially the woman standing in the silver ring listening. The ceiling loudspeaker is activated when visitors stand in the silver ring.



This concept outside the art space is defined differently. Other voices are talking, but the silver rings no longer activate the sound. The rings activate another kind of language, where something different can happen. Annoying.

The physical and phenomenological experiences of space, work and that which is different than the work are one aspect, while a whole other aspect is the decisive communication issue of *who is talking to whom?*

In the art space Mariko Mori is talking through her works and through her poetic voice. We believe in her because we can relate to the images of her with a female voice with a Japanese accent. Consequently, we believe she is speaking from her own experiences and reflecting on them and on cultural symbols. She gives the impression of being a highly confident and reflective artist.

In the non-art area the voice is much more explanatory and speaks

Ill. 23.2: Upon exiting Mariko Mori's exhibition and beyond the "legitimate" art spaces is the NON-ART AREA. This area, in contrast to the fascinating works on display by Mori, is not shown on the map of the exhibition on the back of the museum's folder.

much more didactically *about* Mariko Mori. Obviously not her, the voice takes on the tone of an art institute, reflecting the diction used in the printed catalogue, "Mariko Mori's spiritual turning point, however, was not concentrated exclusively on Buddhism. It is human consciousness as a whole that interests the artist rather than one religion more than another..."²²

ARoS, on the one hand, employs a fine concept to guide the artist as a mediating player in the exhibition via the three silver rings that activate the sound. The non-art area on the other hand clearly indicates isolation and a dissociation to the mediating practises in the workspace. Although there *is* a difference between artwork and communication, must this necessarily be the case?

(2) ... I use it to create my own identity

The security guard dressed in black at the art gallery wanted to prevent me from taking photographs. He was just doing his job to enforce the signs hanging everywhere saying no cameras, no video recorders, no cell phones etc. His task, however, is in opposition to the new practices developing explosively, especially among young people. New technologies and practices offer many different aesthetic and expressive options for communicating one's tastes, style and identity (Michael 2000:35-6).

Photographing and being photographed move the attention to one's own body, posture and clothes as well as to the relations one wants to expose to others: you pose and act in front of the camera. As Roland Barthes observes, "I have been photographed and I knew it. Now, once I feel myself observed by the lens, everything changes: I constitute myself in the process of 'posing,' I instantly make another body for myself, I transform myself in advance into an image" (Barthes 2000:10).

This performative aspect of the visual moves the idea of photography as a picture of *what has been* to a kind of 'new photography' in which a picture becomes an indication of *here I am*. This moment is made possible by digital cameras and phones, which can be used to send pictures instantly via a multimedia messaging service (MMS) to friends the instant they are taken.

This *here I am* approach occurred in the museum and the exhibition, where the cultural milieu and the highly unique pictures or installations can be taken advantage of by young people to mark their style, their preferences and their inclusion and exclusion of others. This approach makes it possible to show others who you are with and who is sharing your experience and tastes.

The approach also involves the option of self-representation, posing and acting in front of the camera as an opportunity for the group to participate in the photographic process as a whole. More people can simultaneously choose to be photographed as well as where, and everyone can

evaluate, criticise and choose the picture with shared content and what is the aesthetically 'right' picture.

This creation of identity is supported by the new visualisation practices and is obviously a process that involves the artist, the exhibition and the museum as elements in the users' positioning of taste and thereby an involvement of culture as part of staging and producing *here I am*.

Many years ago the Canadian museologist Sheldon Annis wrote that one of the pragmatic aspects of visiting a museum was for visitors to be able to hang a scalp on their belts, i.e. now I've also seen the Mona Lisa,³ and Mariko Mori. The performative aspect is propelled by the photography, the camera and now by an even more mobile apparatus and in the resulting practices that develop from the rather new way of looking at photographs and the world. Via documentation and rapid communication, art, exhibition and the museum can be involved and used.

The security guard said stop in a place where saying *here I am*, is not allowed, and especially not showing it! I told him a lie, but I would rather have stepped into one of the silver rings and asked him to take a picture of me.

The museum and the curators possibly saw this approach to creating identity as a means to influence the construction of an actual exhibition in order to provide a variety of different aesthetic and expressive opportunities for visitors to express their taste, style and identity. The opportunities would then be provided by not just the museum or the curators, but by young new visitors.

(3) ... users create the content

The *first* ambiguity I tried to identify is the obviously difficult relation between the artworks themselves and the communication and mediation surrounding the artworks. Nonetheless one position is rather clear: there is someone who knows and wants to give their way of categorising and knowledge to people who are less knowledgeable.

The *second* ambiguity I tried to identify is that young new users might have other agendas than the art, e.g. self-representation, taste and style can be used to create identities and art can provide the background for a larger project. How do the museum and the curator handle this situation in light of the new practices of visualisation?

The *third* ambiguity involves posing a question: does the museum and the curator dare to let go of the communication and mediation and leave the content and form to young new visitors? Does this mean literally allowing users to create their own experiences? And does this mean something more than just individual experiences?

The OECD's definition of *user generated content* contains three elements:

- 1) Publication requirement (access for at least a selected group of people);
- 2) Creative effort (this implies that a certain amount of creative effort was put into creating the work or adapting existing works to construct a new one, i.e. users must add their own value to the work);
- 3) Creation outside of professional routines and practices (motivating factors include: connecting with peers, achieving a certain level of fame, notoriety, or prestige, and the desire to express one's self).⁴

Already in the 1980s the French theoretician of culture, Michel de Certeau, emphasised that in their daily lives people try to familiarise themselves with the huge amount of mass produced goods they use. People rebuild their own worlds and identities from available resources using a range of tactics by combining, adjusting and adding something else⁵ - in addition to *sampling*, an aspect that has become more important today. The process of becoming familiar with what is mass produced is not creativity as defined by the romantic/modern notion of producing something new. This process is a *creative tactic* that, according to de Certeau, "... expects to have to work on things in order to make them its own, or to make them 'habitable'".

Four minutes and thirty-nine seconds of user-generated content on YouTube [Ill. 23.3]: is this clip really an example of user-generated content that meets the criteria of publication, creative effort and being outside professional practices? The title, *La Biennale de Marina: We'll die*, is visible as well as some additional text: *Marina visita la video-installazione di Yang Zhenzhong*.

Ill. 23.3: YouTube, which contains this 'new' artwork, is an example of user-generated content with publication, creative effort and a creation outside professional practices (screen dump 6 June 2008).





Ill. 4: Marina runs towards the huge video projections and stands very close to a man who says, "I'll die".



Ill. 23.5: Marina running beside the huge projections.

Published on YouTube and viewed 381 times,⁶ the video was produced outside professional practices, but is it more than just a reproduction of an artwork? What are the creative aspects? There are two central people in this intense art experience. One is the photographer and the other one is a little girl, who must be Marina, who is visiting the video installation [Ill. 23.4 & 5].

The video shows Marina running and jumping away from the photographer towards the gigantic portraits facing and addressing her and us. She stands extremely close to the video projection, a tiny human being beneath the giants. The soundtrack plays a myriad of voices that softly, thoughtfully, quietly, tensely, powerfully declare, "I'll die".

Marina runs along the many gigantic portraits, not so much to look at them as to move to the bottom of the row of projections. She does not look at them as she gets closer to them. Her actions, however, reflect precisely what the text says: Marina visiting Yang Zhenzhong's video installation.

YouTube lists who has uploaded the video, namely 'ayresmarquespinto', a 49-year-old Brazilian living in Italy named Ayres who works with therapeutic photography and is a cook. This information closely pertains to self creation by using the video and the little girl, consequently turning the video of the visit into a trophy or a recreation of what was produced in the process of making things liveable, what de Certeau calls "...to make them its own, or to make them »habitable«".

Ayres has the power of the camera and chooses where to stand and what to film. He sees himself as the creator of a new work. He sees Yang Zhenzhong's video installation, but he turns it into his own work by seeing it through Marina and also by giving the work a completely new title, *La Biennale de Marina: We'll die*, i.e. "We'll die" and not "I'll die". He chooses from among the hundreds of people saying "I'll die" in many different languages, and reduces the numerous hours of video in the original work to four minutes and thirty-nine seconds. He alters the tremendous physical space by reducing it in size to fit the tiny video screen on YouTube and he plays with the symbolism of dwarfs and giants by inserting a little girl into the room.

Hence Ayres' video communicates about his experience, but the experience is dual edged. The first aspect of the experience is his work with "I'll die" and the second aspect of the experience is the visit with his daughter Marina. There is however also a third and fourth experience: the staging of his daughter's movements in front of the screens; and the future experience where, by visiting the publically available site YouTube, Ayres, his daughter and we can watch and re-watch the video months or years from now when the exhibit has been taken down. Ayres and his daughter can also use the video to cue their memories of their trip to La Biennale.

Ayres generates content; he is creative; he makes the strange familiar. But he does so outside the exhibition space, where his experiences took place. Is it possible to imagine the museum and the curators actively working to contain and develop this kind of user-generated content?

The Rumanian-American creativity researcher, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, thinks that an important factor for creativity of any kind is to have a medium, or as he calls it, a *domain*.

Returning to the ARoS example with the three silver rings, picture putting three rings into another exhibition in front of each piece of artwork. Viewing the silver rings at this point as a domain, they can be used as a sensor-activated format by stepping into them under a loudspeaker

to produce two-minute sound sequences. It is now possible for users who are interested in doing so to create some sort of sound or mood for the artwork by finding a sound or music, designing a sound, sampling a sound, recording their voice, interviewing, reading a text aloud etc. The newly created sound could then become part of the exhibition, either immediately, after 15 minutes or after a user-defined period. Once installed it could remain part of the exhibition for a few hours, days, weeks etc. based on a given selection and replacement strategy. The options are endless. For example rules determining who can use each ring could be established. The first ring, for instance, could be for children twelve and under; the second one for women over the age of 50; and the last one some other age group.

When designing and promoting user-generated content three basic guidelines must be followed:

The **first** and most decisive guideline: Visitors must create the content of the communication and mediation. With no exception and no censorship!

The **second** guideline is to establish what Csikszentmihalyi calls the domain (of the media or format), which then has to be explicitly defined in clear and transparent rules that provide opposition by simultaneously forcing and supporting creativity.

The **third** guideline: Provide personal and material support for finding and technically producing a sound bit.

The question must be asked, however, as to whether every visitor feels compelled to create user-generated content. The American theoretician of new media, Lev Manovich, shows that not every user becomes a producer. His findings indicate that only 0.5-1.5% of users on the most popular sites, e.g. Flickr, YouTube, Wikipedia, upload their own content (Manovich 2008:2), but that 65,000 videos are uploaded daily on YouTube.⁷ Extrapolating from these figures and applying them to Denmark means that a small museum like the Museum of Contemporary Art in Roskilde would generate about 120 users interested in participating in self creation and that a large art gallery like Louisiana would generate about 4,000 users each year.

I want to stress that the highly active involvement of users as co-producers of the content of an exhibition and the communication and mediation of the art influences the art and strips the professional institution of some of its customarily central practices. Might becoming emancipated from these customary practices not lead to new and well-known forms of communication, mediation and self creation being liberated to create new spaces of learning?

Notes

- 1 This text is derived from *Oneness: Mariko Mori*, p. 22.
- 2 From *Oneness: Mariko Mori*, p. 22.
- 3 Annis, Sheldon (1994): "The museum as a staging ground for symbolic action" in Kavanagh, Gynor (ed.): *Museum Provision and Professionalism*, Routledge.
- 4 OECD: Participative web: User-created content 2007, p. 8. www.oecd.org/dataoecd/57/14/38393115.pdf
- 5 *The Practice of Everyday life*.
- 6 On 6 June 2008 at 12:26 PM, the video had been viewed 381 times. On 18 January 2012 the video had been viewed 715 times.
<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=odKJyCWDLzQ>>
- 7 Manovich 2008:3.

Chapter 24: Ten dilemmas professionals face

Qualitative reception studies of cultural communication with more than sixty people and the use of various media provide a multitude of good advice that the designer and the learner/user can use to generate experiences, meaning making and interaction as well as to create cues for changing events, e.g. any form of exhibition. The standpoint here comes from the perspective of the person-in-situation. Transforming this view and understanding into the perspective of the producer or organiser reveals ten pieces of advice or fields that need to be considered. The overall goal for the kind of communication we are interested in is experience, interaction and meaning making and how this affords learning in the sense of *change* (Gjedde & Ingemann 2008:177).

Practical dilemmas for the organiser

The following ten dilemmas stress that there is more than just one good way to assemble narratives, emotional language, objects and visual elements in an exhibition. In this chapter we have chosen to use the term 'visual event' to describe the whole setting around an exhibition, but simultaneously acknowledge that even though it plays a dominant role in what is communicated, the visual aspect is not the only media employed. Each of the ten dilemmas is presented beginning with an overall question, followed by a discussion of the premises involved and then conclusions are made.

(1) Dilemma: Do you want to communicate a message OR do you want the user to ask questions and seek information?

Communication seen from the sender's point of view is made with an intention or the aim of telling or conveying a clear message to a well-

defined target group. This means that in the communication the content needs to be organised to make it more accessible and relevant for the user.

Looking at the visuals, their function is to motivate, create identification and to present trustworthy information and documentation with clear references to the outside world.

If communication is seen from the user's point of view, the whole situation shifts dramatically. The communication, "... becomes a self-motivated inquiry that begins with a problematic situation, a question, an idea that has become relevant precisely because it creates an immediate emotional or intellectual unease" (Hennes 2002:116). This means that the goal of communication is, first, to find ways of assembling problems that will be meaningful enough to capture the user's attention, which means looking for things that are, "... interesting, unusual, contradictory, counter-intuitive, or otherwise challenging" (Hennes 2002:116). Secrets, obstruction and enigma are keywords here - where clarity, determination and smoothness are keywords for goal-oriented communication.

Looking at the visuals, their function is to motivate, create identification and, importantly, to relate to reminiscences and complex imagery.

(2) Dilemma: Do you want to communicate to a person-in-situation where the person is alone OR do you want to create situations where you involve interaction with other people?

The social situation influences the communication process, which is most obvious when you consider people-in-situations, where more people take part in the interaction, for example, at an exhibition where two or more people walk together and share conversations about the communication.

It becomes important to consider how many people you want to involve in the persons-in-situation and what their role should be, i.e. who will take the initiative, who follows who and whether there should be some kind of a public sphere of development.

Reading the newspaper is normally a rather lonely activity done sitting in the train or in a chair at home or in the office. Consider, however, the situation: More people are sitting at the same time and reading the same newspapers, and in that role they are alone, but also part of a social situation where the interaction does not take place immediately, but later in the day when someone brings up topics where others share the fundamental views the interaction is based on. The informal learning of current events taking place today is supported by visuals, often in the form of documents and clearly referential pictures. This person-in-action is rather weak and can be strengthened and provide more insights transformed into more actively organised settings, for example, into learning

spaces like schools where, e.g. newspaper photos can be compared and scrutinised.

(3) Dilemma: Do you just want the person-in-situation to use her body at a minimum OR do you want to create a situation where physical expression is an important part of the communication?

We can start by applying a more extended use of the body in communication, namely at a museum. The visual event is, first of all, social. You walk and talk with a friend or family member while moving through the exhibition rooms, stopping, looking at an object, reading signs, interacting using screens, etc. In most museum settings, this interaction is possible and necessary to create any meaning out of a complex installation, but, in some situations, the interaction is what creates the communication, e.g. at installations in science museums.

You can re-think the relation between person-in-situation from the prosemic theory of Edward T. Hall, which states, "... each one of us has a form of *learned* situational personality. The simplest form of the situational personality is that associated with responses to intimate, personal, social, and public transactions" (Hall: 1966:115). Hall focuses on the relation between people in a physical space and his theory can be used as a valuable tool for the thinking behind a visual event in physical space.

Physically demanding situations can become noisy and diffuse, which means that if the aim of the communication is to create a space for quietness and meditation, one has to consider how the media product is created so that it allows the person-in-situation to sit alone in a quiet place for a long time.

You can be opposed to the exhibition being meditative and quiet and discuss the extent to which the body of the person-in-situation can be seen as private or public, passive or active, or using one or many senses.

(4) Dilemma: Do you know if your person-in-situation is biased OR do you know if you are communicating with an open-minded person-in-situation?

The ordinary way of looking at the user, the receiver and the target group, is by using sociological terms such as age, income and education, but also in terms of lifestyle and segmentation concerning, e.g. traditional versus modern and individual versus collective (Windahl 1992:180). This way of thinking is useful in all situations and can end up aiding in the construction of personas like a target group condensed into one person (Nielsen 2004).

The person-in-action can be seen from a more psychological perspective, where looking at how the user is to handle information becomes

important. Some people are very familiar with and capable of handling contradictory and very complex information and can be seen as very open-minded persons-in-situation. Some people, on the other hand, reject or misinterpret what they perceive as confusing and want to narrow down the possible information in order to protect themselves.

Defining people as either biased or mostly open-minded persons-in-situation has considerable consequences for the content of the information and the aesthetics. Is it possible to include material or changes in the visual event that can overcome this psychological gap without rejecting the two opposing ways of being? Or is the consequence that the two opposing ways of being, biased and open-minded, are so far from one another that two forms of communication and visual events need to be established?

Based on our knowledge, the majority of people are more biased than open-minded, but these ways of being can be affected by the construction of the visual event - which is possible but not easy.

(5) Dilemma: Do you want to let your communication to be an on-going flow OR do you want to have interruptions to create attention?

Most communication is what we will call 'an on-going flow', where the most clichéd, stereotypical and well-known formats and information are used and presented. This includes ordinary news, soap operas, films, reality shows, stand-up comedy, etc. One advantage is that the formats are so well known that they are accepted and looked at with their on-going flow of routine activity. Does anyone learn anything? Yes, they do. Like George Gerbner (1994), who noticed that popular formats in television culture include the teaching of a common worldview, common roles, and common values, finds that it is precisely because the visual events are informal and un-defensive that the learning activity is so persuasive. Similar to drops of water eroding a valley, this process moves people into another realm of reality.

Entertainment can very slowly change something in the on-going flow, for example, ordinary life experiences where nothing seems out of order and no particular attention needs to be paid to the surroundings.

The philosopher John Dewey focuses on the necessity of *interaction* to change or resolve a state of perplexity. He believes that reflection is necessary and requires, "... a forked-road situation, a situation which is ambiguous, which presents a dilemma, which propose alternatives ... Difficulties or obstruction in the way of reaching a belief brings us, to pause" (Dewey 1919:11).

Breaks, obstructions and interruptions are concepts that describe how to initially create attention to mark the start of the experience and learning process. As Tom Hennes (2002:116) points out, however, the ex-

perience becomes a self-motivated inquiry that begins with a problematic situation, a question or an idea that becomes relevant precisely because they create an immediate emotional or intellectual unease. Through the resulting activity, a spark of attention is transformed into interest.¹

What then becomes interesting is not the information alone, but the Jeopardy-like ability to make the user ask good questions to be answered (Becker 1979).

(6) Dilemma: Does the person-in-situation only need to recognise the outer world OR does she need to get an extended experience of the outer world?

The person-in-situation determines to a great extent whether a picture is seen as a picture or glanced over as though it were transparent. The overall guiding principle is the aim of the visual event, not the goal of the producer or the organiser but of the person-in-situation. The individual meets the situation with certain expectations and goals she would like to have fulfilled.

This is highly significant for the situation if the person-in-situation is just waiting for some friends, needs to kill time, is routinely reading the morning paper, relaxing on the sofa during the evening news or is eagerly looking forward to visiting a gallery, is seeking information about an personal important issue, wants to challenge herself and her friends, i.e. simply a mixture of circumstances and goals. Goals can be more clear-cut and involve finding the answer to a specific question such as when did the painter van Gogh live? Most of the time, however, our expectations and goals remain unarticulated.

If the organisers want to fulfil a variety of expectations and goals, then they can opt for everyday-life visuals in an attempt to create and use pictures that nearly appear invisible and clichéd, thus avoiding pushing people away, or the organisers can combine the best of two worlds by fulfilling the recognition modality and the extended modality with greater focus on surprise and aesthetics.²

The recognition modality is often transparent, whereas the reality shown can be so unfamiliar or threatening to the person-in-situation that he or she must shift his or her gaze from the *locked gaze* to a more surprising and aesthetic extended modality called the *opening gaze* to overcome the unwanted visual reality.

(7) Dilemma: Does the person-in-situation reject reminiscences OR does she expect her memory to be challenged?

It is difficult to work with memory as it belongs to the individual and personal realm, but we can displace it in areas that are more tangible,

namely *relations*, where the most important aspect is the difference between *external* and *internal* relations.

A focus on *external* relations opens for an enigmatic imposing of interrelated elements like pictures, objects and short narratives thematically organised, but unsystematically placed, in the whole work. The external relations can also be references to elements, objects or situations in the outside world that are nevertheless mediated by some kind of strangeness, e.g. are presented in a different era. The memory of things in the external relation mode is not very deep personally, whereas the memory of events in the internal relation mode is very deep on a personal level.

One could say that *internal* relations cannot be planned or stimulated because of their personal meaning. As we have argued, however, it is possible if the organiser focuses on two aspects of the visual event, i.e. 1) a strong emphasis on the sense of touch, where the particular is equalised by the universal, as described by John Berger, and 2) a strong emphasis on how to create a mood in the visual event that opens up for remembering and recreating situations (1982:125).

The crucial point is the *retrieval cues*. While the visual alone is obviously a very strong cue, retrieval, which happens more or less by chance for the person-in-situation, can be looked for and examined by the user because of a desire to recall forgotten memories.

(8) Dilemma: Do you only want to give the person-in-situation factual information OR do you want to help her create narratives?

Factual information is helpful for finding out how to do something or learn something specific, e.g. filling out your tax form, getting directions from the Internet or finding basic autobiographical information about a painter and his works in an encyclopaedia.

If we lack motivation, however, we want someone to guide us, but not by simply telling us the information; we want someone to give us questions that cause us to think, for example, in the form of riddles, enigmatic stories and openings. Narratives can provide motivation and understanding in relation to things and events if the organiser provides a productive framework.

Even if we believe that we constantly try to understand what we meet in a narrative frame, it is not that easy³. The organiser needs to decide how potential narratives can be constructed by the person-in-situation and how much narrative guidance is necessary.

Text, objects and pictures can all be part of the narrative, but an object such as a stone axe in a cultural historical museum tells less than a Chagall painting in a gallery. The potential story has to be unpacked and related to the overall or partial narrative.

(9) Dilemma: Do you want the person-in-situation to create identification with you OR do you want to create an understanding of the 'other'?

When we asked the persons-in-situation if they identified with the content and the design in *Vala's Runecast*, they said this was easily done. The men explained that they primarily identified with it because of the violent scenes with blood, swords and a focus on war, while the women explained that they primarily identified with it because the key figure was a woman (the *Norn*) and because of the presence of pictures of nature, the soft aesthetics, moving images, the oracle-like questions etc.

In this very open interactive video, the persons-in-situation apparently projected their identification on the work, but the whole visual event showed a more complex image because the nature of the event invited a more open and not-so-clear identification. In many ways, they constructed a rather stereotypical understanding of the two sexes, but showed more understanding and empathy for the other sex.

In the project with the artist in the gallery,⁴ the person-in-situation tries to find elements to relate to and questions to raise that could have been questions from the artist. By using some kind of narrative construction, the informant simultaneously constructs an image of both herself and the artist, i.e. me and the other.

Topics and visual events that cover, for example, religion and culture, where the understanding of you, me and the other can play an overwhelming and powerful role, are obvious areas to be examined.

(10) Dilemma: Do you want to give the person-in-situation something pragmatically useful OR do you want to open up for reflection and meditation?

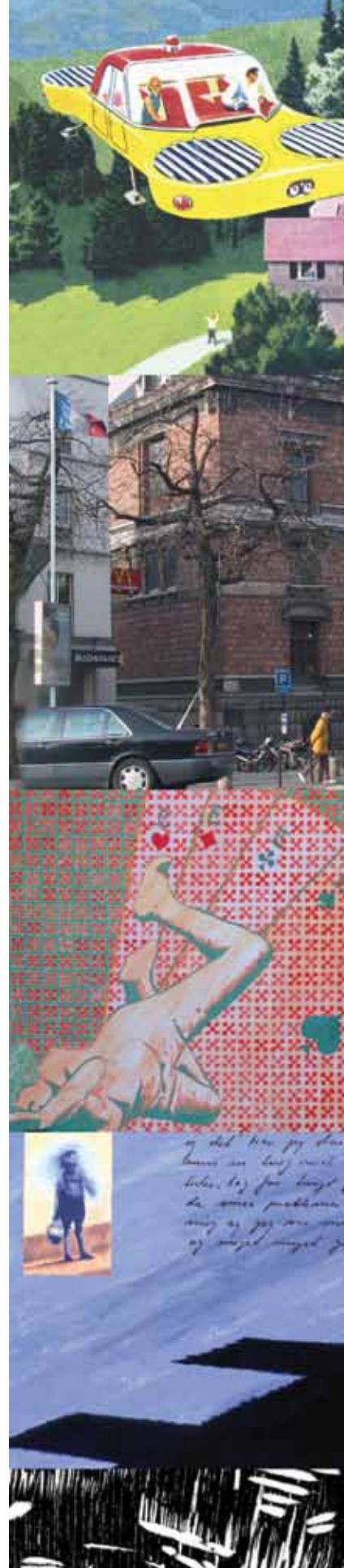
As an organiser of a visual event the pragmatic aspect is obvious: You need something to happen and you want to succeed in your communication. Here, we would like to point out that the notion of reflection and meditation is another important aspect in contrast to the pragmatic aspect. The main reason is that this aspect makes the visual event more memorable and deeply rooted, thereby allowing it to be more easily retrieved.

Mary Carruther's writes in her study of memory in medieval culture that the, "... importance of visual images as memorial hooks and cues is a basic theme in all memory-training advice and practice ..." (1990:221). This means that images are not as much a representation in an objective or reproductive sense, but are often seen as a temporal. It is not a picture of something, but rather, "... the means for memorizing and recollecting the same matter or story that written letters also record" (Carruthers 1990:222). If images and other decorative elements act directly on memory the one thing their usage must, "... produce in order to stimulate

memory is an emotion... It must create a strong response – what sort is of less importance – in order to impress the user’s memory and start off a recollective chain” (Carruthers 1990:257).⁵

Notes

- 1 Tom Hennes (2002:117-118) discusses the problem-solving situation inspired by Dewey in relation to museum exhibitions and objects. He comes up with five key points for the designer or developer: An interruption, observations, the suggestion of alternative solutions, reasoning and verification.
- 2 In the four-gazes model, the recognition modality is associated with the LOOKED GAZE and the extended view is associated with the OPENING GAZE, see chapter 7.
- 3 The two modes of understanding come from Jerome Bruner, who declares that the narrative mode is the normal way of talking about and understanding the lifeworld and the mediated world.
- 4 See chapter 10.
- 5 Jill Bennett substantiates this proposal about medieval culture by arguing that visual icons provide the most effective means of storing and retrieving memories, since the eye can function as a mute witness (Bennett 2006:27).



Exhibitions by the author

The following 19 exhibitions were presented in Denmark from 1963 to 2012:

(1963) Participated with woodcuts in a group exhibition by art academy students; Art Society, Grenaa

(1964) Solo exhibition of 20 linocuts and woodcuts in black and white and colour; Gallery Kaage, Horsens

(1965) Solo exhibition of 30 linocuts and woodcuts; Horsens College of Continuing Education (Horsens Statskole)

(1965) Participated in a group exhibition celebrating the jubilee of Danish experimental poetry and the visual arts magazine *Hvedekorn*; Gallery of Superlove, Copenhagen

(1970) *Some Information about the Earth We All Live On* – extensive exhibition with the environmental activist group NOAH involving more than 30 participants; Copenhagen Town Hall

(1972-1974) *Amager Common 1972* – temporary advocacy exhibition comprising 20 chipboards with black and white photographs and text on the Gypsies and their circumstances in Denmark. Travelling exhibition shown at forty libraries in Denmark

(1975) *North/South* – temporary wall poster exhibition comprising 6 huge wall papers (160 x 100 cm) concerning growth, exploitation, energy crises, relations to the third world – made for Noah/Danida. Travelling exhibition to public libraries and schools.

(1986) *His Master's Voice: The Exhibition Handbook Model Exhibition* – project for a large exhibition about the media and media use. *The Exhibition Handbook* (1986) presents and discusses this exhibition in detail as an example of the work process of an exhibition

(9 – 31 Jan. 1988) *Into the Media: An Introduction to Education* – presentation of 17 various forms of education in a broad range of media; the Round Tower, Copenhagen

(1990-92) *Biotechnology* – travelling poster exhibition sponsored by the Danish Board of Technology comprising eight posters on a topical issue. Five hundred sets displayed at various public libraries and places of study in Denmark

(6 June – 25 Oct. 1993) *The Journey* – opening exhibition. Shaman Tower installation and slide show called *The Journey of the Soul*; the National Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen

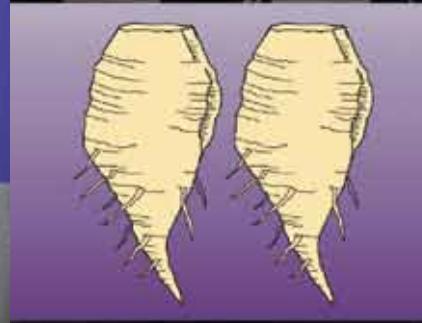
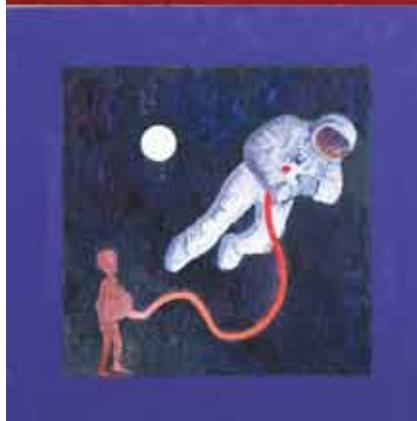
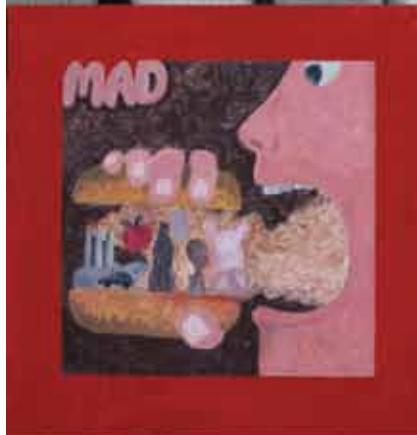
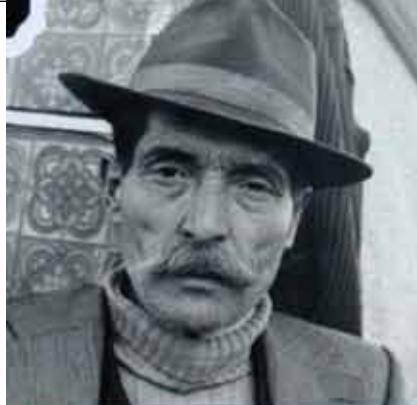
(1998-2002) *The Drifting Sand* – multi-screen show covering over three-hundred years of history of drifting sand; Han Herred Nature Centre

(2003-) *Museum: The Three Monkeys* – online changing exhibition of hear-no-evil, speak-no-evil, see-no-evil monkey collection:
<http://akira.ruc.dk/~bruno/Ingemann/3Monkeys.html>

(13 Nov. 2003) *Places Speaking – Speaking Places* – exhibition and seminar by six researchers on the visual culture of Paris. My contribution was nine large panels with panorama photos of various McDonald's locations in Paris; Roskilde University, Roskilde

(2003) *The Model Exhibition* – 1:10 scale model with small fibre lights and eleven miniature paintings presented together with the original painting. Project subsequently turned into a video and presentation; Project for Gallery Clausen, Copenhagen. Not realised

(Aug. – Oct. 2005) *Nine Hidden Paintings* – solo exhibition; Hvalsø Cinema and Culture Centre



Mad er et problem for mange.



(4 May 2006) *See, 1957 – The Volkswagen of the Air* – exhibition and seminar by five researchers exploring visual culture in 1957. Video installation on values presented in the men's magazine *Popular Mechanics*; Roskilde University, Roskilde

(2009 -) *Inquiries into Visual Memory* – ongoing development of exhibition on projects on unpacking and releasing individual and collective memories:
www.visualmemory.dk

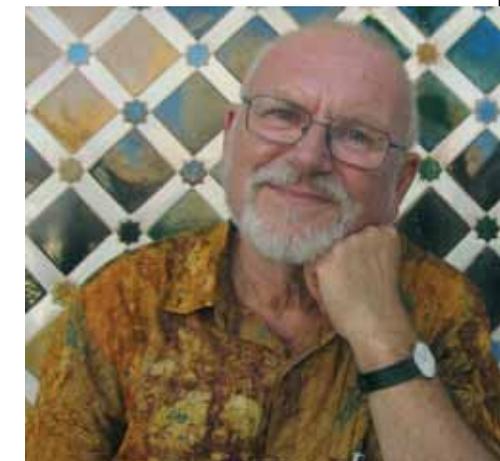
(19 Nov. 2010 – 31 Dec. 2012) *Becoming a Copenhagener* – activist exhibition, film and exploration of what occurred on Amager Common in 1972; focus on immigrants as a catalyst of and pre-condition for change and the growth of Copenhagen; Museum of Copenhagen

Associate Professor *Bruno Ingemann* trained as a graphic designer and has a PhD from Roskilde University in visual communication. Main interests: pictures in digital culture; museum communication; creative processes and methods of production, particularly in visual media; and theories of visual communication. His research currently focuses on three areas:

- *Photography* focused on memory of the mirror and how readers relate to the surface of reality.
- *Museology* in the more narrow sense - focused on the reception of exhibitions and the visitors' creation of meaning from their experiences.
- *Experimental reception studies* focused on developing new methods of observing the observer.

Bruno Ingemann's more than 77 articles and books are available for viewing on the Roskilde University website:

<http://forskning.ruc.dk/site/person/bruno>



Bruno Ingemann in Alhambra.

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