

What does art mediation do?

A series of seminars at Tensta Konsthall during the spring of 2014. In collaboration with the Department of Visual Arts Education and Curatorlab, Konstfack.



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One of the biggest issues in contemporary art is how art is mediated—in what way the audience can meet art and take part of it. How art goes public. Hence, mediation includes presentation and communication about and based on art in a wider sense. As curating education is becoming more common, the focus on how art is presented increases both in the exhibition context, but also outside of established art spaces. Participatory projects demand other ways of communication than the conventional ones. At many museums and art centers, much effort is put into what is called pedagogy, education, and learning, but this is often done with a type of lecturing and neither the art nor the audience's integrity is maintained. At the same time, the school subject, art education, of which art is an important part, gets less and less space in school, and sometimes it completely falls away.

Given this background, it is important to observe what art mediation specifically does today. Through five case studies from different parts of the world, possibilities and pitfalls regarding art mediation are discussed. Is there too little art mediation in today's art institutions, or maybe

too much? What consequences follow an art-focused approach compared to methods focused on the individual? What happens with mediation when it is put in the context of activism? How can art be mediated to make it possible for the individual to critically reflect upon herself and her being in the surrounding society?

Wednesday 29.1, 6:30 pm

Curator Sofía Hernández Chong Cuy lectures under the title "Contemplation".

Wednesday 19.3, 6:30 pm

Professor Helene Illeris lectures under the title "Gallery education, social criticism and change".

Wednesday 2.4, 6:30 pm

Mediator Emily Fahlén lectures under the title "Mediating art at Tensta Konsthall".

Wednesday 7.5, 6:30 pm

Professor Professor Beatrice von Bismarck lectures under the title "Curatorial Encounters".

Thursday 13.5, 6.30 pm

Mediator Janna Graham lectures under the title "Art Mediation: Target Practice vs Para-siting".

Sofia Hernandez Chong Cuy
Wednesday 29.1, 6:30 pm
Contemplations

Perhaps the appearance of the ventriloquist in the present day exhibitionary complex is due to the place—privileged, to be accurate—that narrative has had in much of contemporary art. By ventriloquist I mean a figure who performs a voice in place of another; that speaks of, and in doing so, that makes literal, a story from where the artwork before us has emerged from or, maybe, how it could likely unfold, or be valued, before us. This presentation will look at a seminar model, two art performances, and a sound work to address modes of mediation in and through art, which precede and simultaneously complement, aesthetic and pedagogical pursuits in contemporary art.

This voice, which at best complements an artwork, at worst makes its visual language or performative nature irrelevant, is commonly expressed by an arts curator, educator, or mediator in a belated way, mostly didactically and

un-sensually, and thus far from what differentiates the visual arts from other kinds of cultural production. I consider that much of this happens because of failing to critically address in a curatorial process the place of narrative, including the sources and research which precede it, in an exhibitionary complex, as well as the public's own presumed will and skill in the exercise of contemplating the forces shaping art, its discourses and its institutions. I consider, too, that this is why mediation seems to begin at the moment of raising these basic curatorial questions in the process of organizing an exhibition, whether with an artist, institution or potential audiences, prior to making public a given artwork, in its display or through an event.

Since 2011, Sofía Hernández Chong Cuy is the curator of contemporary art for Colección Patricia Phelps de Cisneros. And, most recently, She was the artistic director and chief curator of the 9a Bienal do Mercosul | Porto Alegre in Brazil. Much of her curatorial work has consisted in working closely with visual artists in conceptualizing meetings points for audiences to experience art

in unconventional ways; these so-called points have been in the form and space of exhibitions, events or printed matter. She takes much pleasure in, and is experienced with, commissioning art, as well as in the history of commissioning arts program initiatives developed since the 1960s to date characterized for collaboration and experimentation. A constant traveler, Sofía Hernández Chong Cuy also spends much of her time conducting field-research on emerging artists and incipient art scenes, visiting studios, exhibitions, events, and sometimes schools, too. What is left of a day's time, wherever that may be, she reads novels, art histories, and nonfiction (in that order); takes good-café-coffee-breaks to meet friends, colleagues and potential collaborators; and checks Twitter feeds to get World news, among other things. Her blog is: www.sideshow.org.

Helene Illeris

Wednesday 19.3, 6:30 pm

Gallery education, social criticism and change

How can gallery education take up the challenge posed by contemporary participatory art to work artistically with and through political issues such as sustainability and social justice? How can we propose alternatives to the individualization of today's "designer-capitalism"? The lecture will present four contemporary conceptions of gallery education with an emphasis on their collaborative and transformative potentials. It will also provide and discuss examples of educational projects both from the field of contemporary art and from the field of gallery education. Finally, it will use the concept of "social criticism and change" to reflect on what I believe should be the basic elements in the art educational encounter: ethics, aesthetics, and politics.

Helene Illeris is PhD and Professor of Art Education at the University of Agder and the Telemark University College (both in Norway). Her research

interests include art education in schools and galleries with a special focus on visual culture, contemporary art forms, aesthetic learning processes, social inclusion, and sustainability. In 2009 she published two books together with other researchers: *Visuel kultur – viden, liv ,politik and Konsten som läranderesurs*. She has also published several articles in English, Danish, Swedish, and Italian e.g. "Employability or empowerment? Lifelong learning in art galleries from a critical curriculum-theoretical perspective" (2011) and "Interrogations: Art, art education and environmental sustainability" (2012). Helene Illeris is a coordinator of the Nordic research network CAVIC (Contemporary Art and Visual Culture in Education) and a former member of the Arts Council Norway.

Emily Fahlén

Wednesday 2.4, 6:30 pm

Mediating art at Tensta Konsthall

There is no longer a bank in Tensta. A local association needs a bigger space but can't afford the rent, and the private landlord does not want to collaborate. A reporter comes to write about the "gang violence" but hasn't perhaps been to Tensta before—even so he has his story set. On the steps outside Tensta Konsthall there are only young men hanging out, just as in the rest of the suburban center. Reflections on specific factors like these are often the basis on which new projects are initiated at Tensta Konsthall: the history and future of the Million Program, the collaboration with a local organization, a writing award for youth living in the area, a separatist fashion project for young girls from Ross Tensta gymnasium. The mediation work is a constant research process where on one hand art and on one hand Tensta as a site are in focus. In examples based on actual situations, the image of a new Sweden is characterized, in which a local organization often has to continue where society falls short with its absence. In the

lecture, Emily Fahlén, mediator at Tensta Konsthall, presents and discusses the art center's mediation work and how it takes shape. With the collaboration as a core and method, and with art and Tensta as bases, the meeting of international and local art projects are discussed, in the borderland between the organizational, curatorial and pedagogical.

Emily Fahlén (1983) has since 2011 worked as a mediator at Tensta Konsthall. She has led the project The Silent University, a knowledge platform for asylum seekers, undocumented migrants and refugees, the collaboration with Kvinnocenter in Tensta Hjulsta and 13 different art camps for kids and youth in Stockholm. Emily Fahlén was educated at the Department of Visual Arts Education at Konstfack and at the Department of Art History at Stockholm University.

Beatrice von Bismarck
Wednesday 7.5, 6:30 pm
Curatorial Encounters

If we assume that the basic activity of curating implies making connections then the encounter between hitherto unconnected people, but also things, spaces and information marks the core of any curatorial situation. This implies the necessity to shape and articulate this encounter, adjust and modify it in accordance to changing contexts, define and redefine its aesthetic, social, economic and political meanings. The encounter becomes the zone of mediation. Taking the exhibition “When Attitudes Become Form—Bern 1969 / Venice 2013” at the Fondazione Prada, Venice, in 2013 as an exemplary case study—an exhibition that invoked the now legendary exhibition “When Attitudes Become Form: Works—Concepts—Processes—Situations—Information”, at the Kunsthalle Bern in 1969 the talk will trace some of the potentials and conditions of curatorial encounters, their effects and the changes they undergo in the process of spatial, temporal, material, social and symbolic shifts of context.

Beatrice von Bismarck (Leipzig/Berlin) teaches art history, visual culture and cultures of the curatorial at the Academy of Visual Arts Leipzig. From 1989 - 1993 she worked as a curator of the department of 20th Century art Städtischen Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt/Main and until 1999 she taught at Lüneburg University. There she was co-founder and -director of the project-space „Kunstraum der Universität Lüneburg“. In Leipzig she is also co-founder of the project-space „/D/O/C/K-Projektbereich“ and initiator of the M.A. Program “Cultures of the Curatorial” which started in autumn 2009. Current research areas: Modes of cultural production connecting theory and practice; curatorial practice; effects of neo-liberalism and globalization on the cultural field; postmodern concepts of the „artist“. Publications include: - Games Fights Collaborations. Art and Cultural Studies in the 90s, Ostfildern-Ruit 1996. (ed. with Diethelm Stoller, Ulf Wuggenig); - Christian Philipp Müller. Branding the Campus. Art, Architecture, Design, Identity Politics, Düsseldorf 2001. (ed. with Diethelm Stoller, Astrid Wege, Ulf Wuggenig); -Interarchive. Archival Practices and Sites in the Contemporary

Art Field, Cologne 2002. (ed. with Hans-Peter Feldmann, Hans Ulrich Obrist, Diethelm Stoller, Ulf Wuggenig); - Grenzbespielungen. Visuelle Politik in der Übergangszone (Performing the Border. Visual Politics in Zones of Transgression), (ed.), Cologne 2005; - Globalisierung/ Hierarchisierung. Kulturelle Dominanzen in Kunst und Kunstgeschichte (Globalization/ Hierarchization. Cultural Dominances in Art and Art History), Marburg 2005 (ed. with Irene Below); - Nach Bourdieu: Visualität, Kunst, Politik (After Bourdieu. Visuality, Art, Politics), Vienna 2008 (ed. with Therese Kaufmann, Ulf Wuggenig); - Auftritt als Künstler (Performance as Artist), Cologne 2010; - Cultures of the Curatorial (ed. With Jörn Schaffaf and Thomas Weski), Berlin 2012.

Janna Graham
Thursday 13.5, 6:30 pm
Art Mediation: Target Practice vs
Para-siting

The presentation will name a key conflict in the practices of mediation: that between targeting audiences—that is cultivating access to, inclusion of, and increasing audiences for cultural objects and institutions as they stand and para-siting, making, and presenting culture that is useful to and in solidarity with projects of decolonization and social justice. The difference between these concepts is both directional and ethical. This presentation will argue strongly against the former, making use of theories of de-colonization such as Brazilian pedagogue Paulo Freire's critique of the "banking concept" of education in which in which the flow of cultural information begins with the institutions of culture and is imparted to its others. Arguing for para-sitic practices, I will share historical examples and experiences from five years of collective research on the Edgware Road and other London neighborhoods, in which cultural workers have attempted to develop projects in solidarity with the struggles

of migrants, sex workers, high school students, homeless people, and the elderly, while attached to a mainstream cultural institution. The contradictions born of such an experience are characteristic of those that often face mediators today, torn between a neoliberal cultural sphere with its eyes set on expansion, drawn into the project of "integrating" newcomers and unruly social elements and the possibilities of committed social and transversal practices.

Originally trained as a Geographer, Janna Graham has initiated and collaborated on a number of pedagogical, artistic and research projects in and outside of the arts. She is currently Projects Curator at the Serpentine Gallery, where she works with others to create The Centre for Possible Studies, an artistic residency, research space and popular education program in the Edgware Road neighborhood of London where artists and local people develop 'studies of the possible' in response to social inequalities of urban space. At Serpentine she has also developed the project Skills Exchange: Urban Transformation and the Politics of Care, a three year program

of artists working in the context of elderly care culminating in the recently published *Art+Care: a Future*. She has been an educator, researcher and curator at institutions such as the Art Gallery of Ontario (Toronto), the Whitechapel Gallery (London), Vanabbemuseum (Eindhoven), Plymouth Art Centre (Plymouth). Graham is a member of 10 person international sound and political collective Ultra-red, works with the Precarious Workers Brigade in London and is part of the band and neo-liberalism study group Chicago Boys: while we were singing they were dreaming.



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