

Much ado about nothing

Can you send nothing – nothing packed in a cardboard-box - back and forth between Stockholm and New York? Can you apply plaster around an environmental disaster? What if we presented artworks to an audience despite no presence of an actual artwork? Do we really know how long a ruler is? Do we remember the disappointed and offended people from the daily newspapers? What if Joseph Beuys really would be here today?

In the exhibition on Conceptual art in Sweden Kalmar Konstmuseum has compiled a presentation of many forgotten works from the fifties and forward. Ideas, philosophy, seriousness and subtle humour are mixed. Works that was made in the sixties which could have been made today or the opposite. You need time for reflection in this condensed and interesting show.

Is there something different in Swedish conceptual art compared to other countries? Why didn't the large art institutions embrace and show conceptual art? Many small art publishers, galleries and artists or artists' collectives in the south of Sweden seem to have been the cultural bearer. Leif Eriksson, The collector of artists' books, and Bo Cavefors and Kalejdoskop publishers for instance.

The artists Anna Lundh examined nothing. She sent a parcel containing nothing between Stockholm and New York. The documentation is shown in the exhibition. Nothing, or silence, is also in the sound work by Conny Blom 4.33. Minutes of Stolen Silence. Who owns the silence? Does John Cage have the copyright?

Annika Ström refers to nobody in her green nuance-painted text-piece in "This work refers to nobody". In an art world that constantly wants to compare artworks by different artists her work stands like her own statement, whilst name-dropping a reference to a famous artist could make your stocks rise on the market.

Alessandra di Pisa investigates the idea of art. What is art and how does it come into existence? She explains an artwork and discusses it with an audience at Liljevalchs konsthall. But, in fact there is no artwork present. Or is there?

The walls filled by disappointed and offended people create a monumental work of faces. Magnus Bärtås has collected the complaints in newspapers since 1994. He uses a method I and many children with me found amazing in the seventies. By melting candle wax and drip it on the picture the imprint of the face is stuck on the wax when you remove it. Pale imprints and pale faces similar to pale memories. They all feel like life has treated them unfair. The artist who wants to keep his studio in a condemned dockyard. The artist who feels graphic art has lost its legitimate status. The resigning local politician who claims to be the subject of a conspiracy. The man whose potato crop was destroyed by constant rain. The man who spent his entire life in asylum by mistake. The woman who is called 'psycho' by an insurance company and is refused further compensation and so many more complaints. They probably need to sing it out loud in the Complaint's choir of Oliver Kochta Kalleinen and Tellervo Kalleinen...

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