

4th of September 2006, National Library, Copenhagen

When reading aloud to an audience, make sure you understand everything you read. If not, read again. Check and adjust the microphone. Do you have enough water in front of you?

A script

Should this presentation be documented?
Should a character perform the presentation?
Should I have a script?

I have been invited to present my work, to perform a presentation.
I will present my work, which is to come, and focus on a project which I have already started but not yet finished.

Description of an ongoing project.

Kira Carpelan

An Image of a Portrait?
Should she read this?
Every time I describe the project it will change. This has happened before.

Documenting a reality created for the camera.

What do you call a film that documents itself? A documentary?
Like an abstract painting, referring to it self? To its material, surface and to its creation. How would this film look? Where is the surface of/in the film?

Introduction

Last summer I was invited to produce an exhibition at Färgfabriken, a Kunsthalle in Stockholm. The exhibition will open in February 2007. The exhibition space is one big room of approximately 900 square meters. The exhibition will be called *Kira Carpelan*. I decided to invite the artist Kira Carpelan, who is 32 years old and in her last year at Konstfack in Stockholm, to do the exhibition for me. I would produce the exhibition as a producer, and give her everything she needs in order to make the exhibition. I would provide or find the funding for the project. She would have access to all my existing work, and all my work which is to come, or is under production. She would have access to my notes and archives, to my contacts in whatever area, she would get my advice and assistance, and I would give her any help she needs. At the same time she would allow me follow and document the process with a video camera, interview her, film her in all possible situations, in order to produce interesting material for a film, possibly a feature film. The film would be called *Kira Carpelan*.

Speculations

Possibilities are things already done. Possibilities only consist of things we already know of, things and thoughts that have already been produced. The possible future has already happened. "When the 50s were still fresh". Imagine possibility as an image, a possible image. Whatever image we can imagine, it has already been seen, since we can imagine it. It is possibly not the same as documenting things we don't see; the photograph as news, or witness or evidence. It is more about an image never seen. Possibly a photograph/image were you don't recognise yourself.

How to develop a work, which I as an artist, producer, director, actor, curator, writer do not recognise?

Speculations on previous work

Photography. What is a photograph? What is the photograph producing? Definitions, values, memory, common memory, future, history.

Photography is not a technique. Photography is not a medium. Photography is a practice/method of thinking, a practice/method of perception, a method of communication, a language, a structure, an archive. Photography is a language constituting our perception and thinking. We live in the photographic era with different layers of fiction and limitation. The photograph is not in front of us. We are the image and the photograph is the mirror. We can only repeat an image we have seen. A common/public thinking, a common/public language, a common/public memory.

Kira accepted the invitation and the project started in February last year. We would have one year to perform the project without knowing how it would proceed, develop or end, or what would be produced.

We agreed that Kira would have the total right to make the final decisions concerning the exhibition.

Possibly she is my project, my work of art?

And I would have the total rights to decide on the film and all documentation.

Kira would receive a salary during the project, paid by me or the Kunsthalle.

Is the project performed in order to produce material for the camera? Is the camera present in order to create an exhibition? The exhibition will be the material. The project is the material. We are the material. Will the film be the material for the project?

In order to see what would be credible, we also have to look at what is not credible, the not interesting material.

A collaboration, is this to be considered a collaboration? An abstraction of the artist's role? If the work is about possibilities, if this could be one interesting part of the work, how can we stay there as long as possible?

The idea to let something go very far, too far. How far can we go? Where, what, who are the limits? Possibly Kira is my limit? To practice speculation.

The unconditional conversation, is it possible? Should we find out about the conditions? From all possible perspectives?

She will be my mirror, and I will be hers. I always feel limited by my own limitations. Now I will see my limitations, with great pain. I was looking forward.

Should I create a character from my experiences of Kira and include her in another project? But I felt like an actor who doesn't agree on the costume, but still has to do her role. I will expose myself to myself, and Kira will force me to do things I have never done before. Force me to another action and perception, to do and to think differently. Especially since I don't know her. Or do I just enjoy when people are working for me or for my work?

My responsibility is to help her to make a good exhibition with good art. As good as she wants. Hopefully the exhibition will be more interesting than if I had worked alone.

The objective and the subjective in photography. An objective presentation in the historical museum, a subjective camera from whose perspective?

We are all a camera now. It is the practice of photography that has changed photography and the moving image. We have cameras everywhere, in everything. Every person is a sender, as long as she has a name. Is objectivity to be found in the anonymous images? Or in the registration of our movements and non-movements? In the thinking and performing camera?

Call for contributions

All Images of an Anonymous Person

A project by Miriam Bäckström and Carsten Höller

If you would like all images that were ever taken of you to be published in a book, we would be grateful if you could contact us. As many images as we can get hold of, depicting you at different times, will be printed without comments or names.

The book will be published by Moderna Museet, Stockholm, in conjunction with Miriam Bäckström's and Carsten Höller's exhibition *Amplified Pavilion* in the Nordic Pavilion at the 51st Venice Biennale in June 2005. Please contact Tove Kullberg at Moderna Museet, or send in a few photographs, if you would be interested in participating.

We received 190 people who were interested in allowing to produce a book consisting of all existing images of one person. We selected one person who during a period of three months

found 3.147 photographs depicting herself alone or with others in different situations at different times of her life. She was 23 years old when we published the book.

Introduction

I have no idea what I'm doing, where we are in this work, or where we will end up. I have no script.

The first thing we did was to have discussions and meetings, which were recorded, in order to create a common ground, a common experience. I invited different people that interviewed us or were interviewed by us. We were mirroring the project through the people participating.

Still photography,

Estate of a Deceased Person

Photography as a last memory. 1992-1996 I documented apartments of people who had recently died. I was imitating the language of photography used by cultural historical museums but presenting the private instead of the common, the public. Combinations of objects, a context organised by a person who can't tell the story or history behind, between the objects. Photograph without its caption, without its text.

Questions asked by us or by others

What is the project?

Are all these questions the project?

Does Kira exist for real? Will the viewer ever doubt?

Why did I choose Kira? What am I interested in?

The power, who has the right to decide the limits of the project? Who has the right to change opinions? And agreements? Who has the right to end the project?

What can we talk about? What can we not talk about? Why not?

How close can we get? A professional friendship. To be able to criticise and be criticised.

Should we take a break when we get tired of each other?

We need a conflict! For the film.

If I put Kira in difficult positions, do I put myself in difficult positions? Or the project?

What happens if one of us gets bored?

Am I the viewer in this project? Creating situations we can look at and describe.

Set Constructions and Museums, Collections and Reconstructions

1995- 2001 I was documenting presentations made by others. Images, archives made by others. Installations, apartments, streets, architecture, landscapes built for a film. Built for a camera, the film camera. Built from the position of a camera.

Or as in the museum series: installations built from a photograph, reconstructions, reconstructed from one point of view, the view of the camera, where the camera was positioned when the photograph was taken. Presented possibly in the museum, possibly as a diorama, to be seen from one point of view. The viewer as a camera. From one perspective.

The museum and their collections as our common memory. The photograph as our common memory. All images as my memory. As a language. I was studying the structure and methods of public museums and applying their strategies on my own work, but with another interest and another purpose.

The subjective museum. The subjective point of view. The museum/institution as a museum, not as a monument of memory, but a museum of amnesia, of loss of memory. What does the museum not present, collect and document?

Is my subjective, private, mental archive constituted of the same system, values, criteria, methods as the public collection? On whose commission is my memory collecting material?

What does my memory not document, collect and present to me?

Who is producing my work?

The ability of the camera to present, represent and produce images. The camera sees all. The large format camera's hyper-ability to see. Hyper-perception. Hyper-vision. Hyper-reality. The eye of the camera sees more than I do. The camera has a better memory than I have. A memory so big, so beyond us and our capacities, so beyond my comprehension. Possibly similar to human intuition.

The ability of the photograph to create an overview, totally sharp, focussed.

Kira's film

Yes, why did I choose Kira? What was my interest?

We were both working separately on a script where all the characters would be just one individual. We found this interesting. Why not stimulate each other's project, let them develop in parallel, but still be two different productions.

Kira wrote her script and told me she would like to do a film, a video work for the exhibition.

Rebecka was to play one part. I was asked to play the other part. I documented the shooting of the film.

It was interesting to be in front of the camera. I was not a good actress. Rebecka directed me.

Kira was doing her best. I was doing my best. No improvisations allowed.

I never got hold of my character. My character was most likely based on Kira herself. I was asked specifically not to interfere with anything. I was now an actress and only an actress. Perhaps she wanted me to be a person who didn't know her role? Perhaps I was performing well?

After the recording Kira disappeared. Finally I got a message, she needed to take a break.

Rebecka

The first work with moving images, video, was entitled *Rebecka*.

I invited a Swedish actress, Rebecka Hemse, to collaborate on a film project. I interviewed Rebecka during a period of five months. My questions were about her experiences as an actress, and her very personal experiences as a private person, and from that material I wrote a script. The script is an interview with Rebecka, 40 minutes long. She wasn't given the script before the shooting, she didn't know the text beforehand, before the shooting started. In her scripted answers I have included myself and my own professional and personal history. In between the questions I ask her to perform certain things in front of the camera. She eats. She cries. She lets her hair down.

What could Kira do, and why doesn't she?

All that is mine is yours. I'm one of your assets. My experiences are at your disposal. And the other way round?

Will Kira take over? That would be interesting.

Does it hurt when she picks and selects?

If she doesn't criticise me, she will make me a stranger to myself.

Do I want Kira to change?

How much do we actually understand each other?

How do I make Kira understand her work?

Betraktaren/the Viewer

The second film was entitled *Betraktaren/the Viewer*.

I invited Rebecka again, and a second actor, Tomas Pontén. This time Tomas directed Rebecka according to the script, helping her to become a better actress, possibly a better person, and to help her to perform a character called Rebecka. When the shooting started there was no script. We started with improvisations and the script was finished the last day of shooting. Developing as a parallel production.

Kira Carpelan, the film

The *Kira Carpelan* film as an abstract conversation.

How abstract can a film be?

What we remember of a moving image, are the characters and the details. How important is the story? Is the story based on the text? On things we can talk about?

What I say here has not necessarily anything to do with truth. I decide what material to create and to choose. I need conflicts, turning points and interesting scenes for the film.

Is the narration of the film what we choose to do, choose to feel and say, as much as what we choose not to do, feel and say?

Who is the camera?

Shall I be visible?

Shall Kira play Kira?

The film should not describe the process from beginning to end. I would rather see the film use the uncertainty concerning its own development and creation, similar to the whole project?

Could the film repeat the questions I have asked myself during these months? Could the film ask questions to itself? Or to the project? The film couldn't possibly foresee its perspectives, its scenarios and the end, its own end? Could the project question the film?

Speculations on the moving image

Images before the shooting, collecting material in order to communicate and produce a new image. Texts produced while shooting, the camera is always recording, the situation is documented. Space before and behind the camera. Every actor as a camera. No overview. Should it be emotions, or images of emotions? Movements, or images of movement? A documentary, or an image of the documentary?

Narrations and the alternative narration, the other perspective. Who is the camera?

It is while describing something specific, or possibly anything at all, that the images and the thoughts take shape and develop. By doing, performing we can describe, record and transcribe it. Then we can talk about it. Clichés are images we all see and refer to. How to think without clichés? How to create images of my own? I have to change the conditions of my own production and thinking. Not only for me, but also for the viewer, and for the space of the presentations. Every space has limited expectations. Can you present a material without a narration? Is it still a material? An object without a context, is it still an object?

How abstract can a moving image be?

I have no images of my own. How to produce images that do not exist? If I saw one, would I recognise it as an image? Another image, how does it look?

Possibly to see from the inside of something, instead of looking at an image?

Do I need a mask in order to describe, in order to tell a story, in order to create an image?

Another voice? Who am I to play? Myself? What is my interest and my motivation? From the perspective of the image? The image as a camera? Is the image looking at us? Is the mirror looking at us? The camera as the mirror? The viewer as a mirror? We as the actress? As the view? How does it look from within the image? The image as a subject? Could that be a subjective camera? Or an image of an subjective camera? Have I seen that? And was it interesting?

Where are we now?

Is Kira a very demanding actress, acting as an artist?

Kira is cutting her film at the moment. In some weeks we will start writing different scenes for the film *Kira Carpelan*, based on our common experiences. And if Swedish Television will document some meetings and discussions for their film, we have to write a script for that.

We have to practice being private.

Kira asked me to meet her professor at Konstfack, who needs information about Kira's project. Kira decided to exhibit her film as her examination work. I will film the meeting.

"These problems you have as a young person. You think you know so much."

I know less than her.

How faithful should I be to the project, the concept? I have to change it if it's not going in an interesting direction. But I'm not supposed to. What do I do if the exhibition turns out to be uninteresting? How do I know if it is uninteresting? If I'm supposed to go beyond my limits and hopefully see something else? Something I can't identify.

It is possible that I am angry with her? Or with myself? Is she not serious in what she is doing?

To try reaching a person you will never reach. Am I serious in what I'm doing?

Everything I can identify with her is possibly my own problem, my own denial.

The collapse of a project, the collapse of a woman, a study of development? That could be a possible conflict.

To view, to study a person, what is that? What does it mean? What will happen? Different ways of studying? Different interests. To view without any interest?

The concept is a method, which can be applied to photographic language to transfer it to other places, structures and contexts. The difference between the concept and the experiment? In contexts where the visual result might not be the interest. The concept as an abstraction. Try not to imagine the image, think instead of the reason, purpose or desire that causes an image to be made.

Changing perspectives is another strategy for thinking differently. Compared to your previous thoughts. To loose the grip of the over view and the relevance of the work. A project where I would not be in control of the procedure. A project where the main condition is not to know what will happen next. Improvisation, being present in a situation.

The moving image which reveals everything. How to write a text as if I were a camera? How to write like a large-format camera? It registers, documents, reacts and writes itself. A clear view. Intuition as text? Possibly a massive text, consisting of several layers where the interesting and the uninteresting would be in relation to and dependent of each other. Can we become part of the image through the text, without the distance of studying a photograph? The text would describe a condition, a presence, a focus where the information creates new connections. It would be addictive, possibly, like the moving image. This text would not necessarily have to do with something real.

Within the possibilities of the moving image we can follow a character and her thoughts, not necessarily based on a logical concept. Rather on fragments. But the fiction is not without problems since it will become very present and very real. A new image. A common image we can describe, talk about and repeat endlessly. You will have the same problems and capacities as you characters. You will start walking and talking like them. You have focused so hard on creating this image/character, that they will stay, as most future visions do. They create new needs and desires and you have to test them. See this as a possibility, when fiction becomes a real option through the image. Or do I become image again?

Questions to Kira

Do you think you will change?

Whom do you want to satisfy?

Do I interest you?