Anna Ådahl
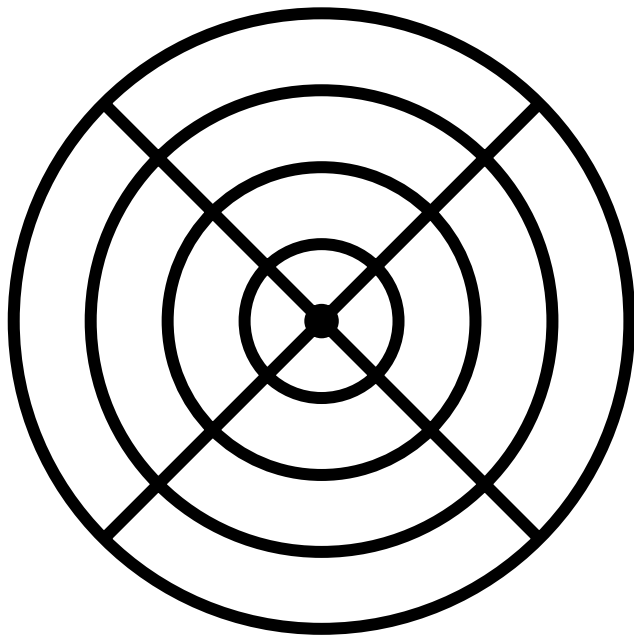
IN DEPENDENCE.

CROWDS, GESTURES

■ 1. Jacques-Louis David, *The Oath of the Tennis Court, June 20th 1789*, 1791. Pen and wash with brown ink, heightened with white on paper
■ 2. *acceptera*, Gunnar Asplund, Wolter Gahn, Sven Markelius, Gregor Paulsson, Eskil Sundahl, Uno Åhrén, 1931
■ 3. László Moholy-Nagy, *Dream of the Boarding School Girls*, 1925. © László Moholy-Nagy/BUS 2010
■ 4. John Heartfield, *All Fists Clenched Into One, AIZ* #13, 1934. © The Heartfield Community of Heirs/BUS 2010
■ 5. Louis Lumière, still image from *Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory*, 1895
■ 6. Alexander Rodchenko, *Female Pyramid*, 1936. ©Alexander Rodchenko/ BUS 2010

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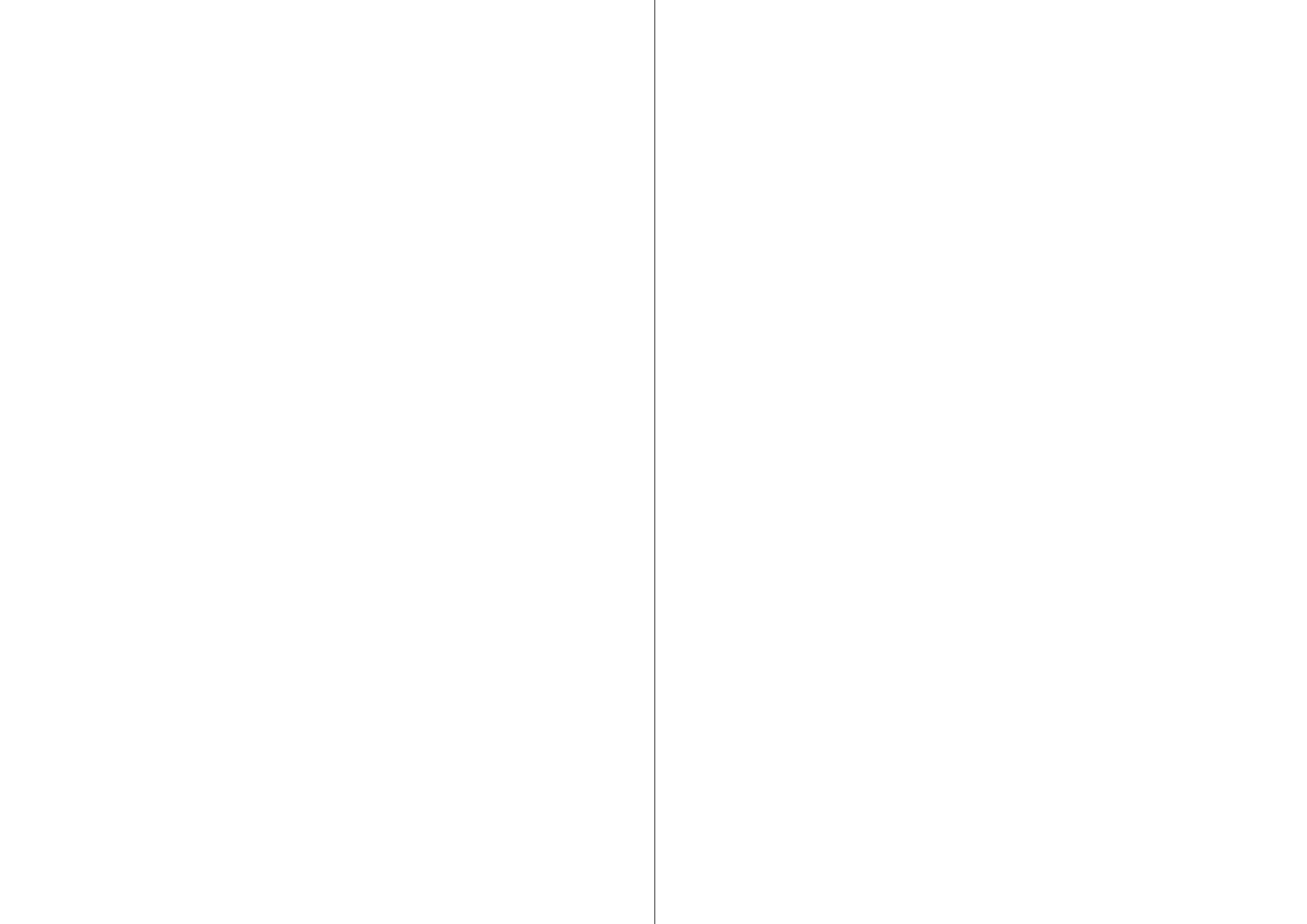
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Anna Ådahl

IN DEPENDENCE.

CROWDS,

GESTURES

Diana Kaur

BY WAY OF AN INTRODUCTION

13

In the spring of 2009, Anna Ådahl contacted me with an invitation to collaborate on a publication that would be more than an artist monograph. In order to envision this we started by asking: what is an artist monograph today? What purpose does it serve aside from presenting an artist's practice? How can an artist publication be accessible and urgent to a diverse audience yet at the same time be involved in an acute dialogue with an artist's practice? This marked the beginning of a year that would revolve around these and many other questions. Our ambition to scrutinise conventions regarding artist monographs lead us to expand the project in as many directions as feasible within the frameworks of time and economy. We invited a group of practitioners who in each of their fields had engaged with the theme of crowds and who had in some way informed the recent developments in Ådahl's practice.

Ådahl's early works were mostly video-based and dealt with issues of the body, space and the interface and negotiation between them. She produced several films in which bodies and their gestures and language were examined in different ways, like in *Le Rêve* from 2002, a collaborative project with choreographer Fabrice Lambert. In it, his still body was filmed in extreme close-up and projected onto a large screen, after which he entered as a dancing body on the same vast theatre stage — a play with perspective and a primordial scene that is perhaps difficult to locate with language, but which nevertheless constantly reverberates in her practice. Particularly the films *In Dependence* [P75] and *Adversary* [P159] are communicated by a complex interplay of exhaustive gestures and empty rooms. Federico Nicolao's text gives a generous insight into the artistic work behind the films — her inspiration and references as well as key conceptual decisions.

A turning point in Ådahl's practice toward notions of multitude and crowds came with the video work *Student 2005*, [P93] where she filmed bands of students celebrating having passed their examinations and graduating from

secondary school. As the tradition prescribes, they ride on truck-beds through the city centre, playing loud music, dancing, drinking beer and announcing their freedom — a very common sight in Sweden in springtime. But amid their joyous chanting, the film also detects the students' concern for their future — perhaps the anticipation and anxiety connected to becoming an adult and entering the collective, the mass.

Fabien Vallos writes in his essay 'Figures of Unconditionality' about the feasting crowd, the primordial conflict between the two distinct modes of being: the dependent and the independent. The feast epitomizes these two conditions in all its generosity and affirmative instability. In the installation *Staging Independence*,[P33] Vallos locates a plastic tension that allows for this struggle to be imagined in a tug of war between the fraternal, the shared, and the separated, the single; the feast has always brought people together, only to separate them again in the morning, when it's over.

The tension between immersion in the crowd and the longing for solitude after separation from it is also a notion Sven-Olov Wallenstein relates to in his contribution 'Mass and Mimesis'. He relates this idea back to the writings of Baudelaire on the artist's duality between impression and representation, and the precarious balance between participation and the particular. Wallenstein taps into the current resurgence of interest in the writings of French sociologist, criminologist and psychologist Gabriel Tarde, whose works were among the first to introduce the category of the crowd in an organized fashion. His research led him to identify and isolate different types of societal dynamics of which mimesis — the mimetic impulse — was the most important. Without shying away from the problematic aspects of resuscitating a thinker from the end of 19th century, Wallenstein locates key concepts in Tarde's works to both explain the renewed interest in them as well as to show how crowds — for instance with the aid of modern technology — are disciplined into becoming organised publics.

In the installation *Staging Independence*,[P33] Wallenstein also notes a reference to Elias Canetti and his seminal work *Masse und Macht* (*Crowds and Power*) from 1960, in which Canetti draws from pioneering crowd-research — such as the aforementioned Tarde writings — to describe its inherent logic. Canetti's elaborations on crowd dynamics have also inspired the staging of the film *In Dependence*,[P75] where references are made to what could be described as the three stages in the life of a crowd: the initial giving up of individuality to become a part of the greater mass; the euphoria of immersion and participation; and finally the breaking-up and the necessary regaining of individuality.

In contrast to the intense performances in the films, the stage set in the photographic series *Democracy*[P57] is completely empty. With attention to detail and recurring traits, the collation and display of the photographs suggest a documentation of the architecture of People's Parks (*Folkparker*). Wallenstein describes the series of photographs as provoking a certain nostalgia, even tenderness — but he also recognizes the eerie remnants of state-endorsed power that these institutions incorporated and exercised in a not too distant past.

The leap from People's Parks to contemporary crowd management strategy might seem vast, but the two are connected in that they both organize our time and movement in the public space. Where the People's Parks, however, are limited allotments, crowd management strategy permeates society on all levels. In her practice as an architect, Fanny Stenberg designs these environments with regard to their minute details, in order to optimise how people traverse them in their daily lives. Her text deals with such issues of space and how it is internalized in the human condition. In the ongoing project *Public Matter*,[P109] Ådahl recuperates objects from public spaces that are abraded by the use of crowds. Exhibited as sculptures, elements such as handles rounded from the touch of hands and steps gouged out by countless feet flirt with the aesthetics of minimalist art. Though Stenberg refrains from mentioning Ådahl's works

directly in her reflection, focusing instead on the planning of public spaces as a seedbed for society, there is an oscillating feedback between her text and Ådahl's collection of retrieved objects, selected and displayed for their worn varnish.

Kim West begins 'Collage and Crowd — Notes on the Histories and Politics of Collage and Montage' by borrowing a potent image of the crowd, conjured by Robert Musil in his novel from 1930, *The Man Without Qualities*. West's essay continues to trace the histories of the collage as medium from early Modernism, approaching a variety of theoretical contexts while also isolating prominent features of the collage technique, as well as critically reflecting on its potential urgency today as an artistic strategy. One might ask: just what is it that even today makes collage so different, so appealing? West's reflection points to its inherent ability to incorporate and contest prevalent notions by the simple operation of combining incongruous elements, thus creating a conflict on the surface that reverberates on all levels of meaning.

The expanded scope of this book is mirrored in the configuration of heterogeneous texts and images. This assemblage of sorts, with varying degrees of alignment between the different elements, suggests something between a theoretical critical reader, thematic text anthology and artist look book. To cover Ådahl's multidimensional practice, we invited a group of contemporary thinkers and practitioners to write freely starting from the notion of crowds. This resulted in some of the texts not directly mentioning Ådahl's practice — like the contributions by Lee, Stenberg and West. In Lee's case it comes naturally: her response to the invitation is a poem, a linguistic gesture. Stenberg and West complement the book with in depth analyses solely from the perspective of an architect and art critic, respectively — although numerous connections to Ådahl's practice can be distinguished upon closer look. The flow of the texts has been informed by the succession of key projects in Ådahl's production, present-

ing concepts and familiarizing the reader with her practice, beginning with Stefan Jonsson's text 'Inside the Fire — Collective and Individual in Anna Ådahl's Art', a comprehensive introduction to the politics of crowds starting with the French revolution, through the passage between the wars, and leading up to today. This book traverses Ådahl's production, ending with film stills of *Adversary*,[p159] from 2010, and notes on the notion of gesture, providing an insight into her artistic process in relation to referential sources.

As the editor I would like to end this introductory note by thanking all the contributors: Stefan Jonsson, Mara Lee, Federico Nicolao, Fanny Stenberg, Fabien Vallos, Sven-Olov Wallenstein and Kim West. Their individual contributions present and inform Anna Ådahl's work and the recurring theme she deals with: that of the crowd. I would also like to thank the visionary publisher OEI Editör for their continuous support, for overseeing the project in its final stages and for bringing it to an audience. And many thanks also to the committed graphic design duo Konst & Teknik, who has followed the process closely and gifted the content with its own clearly legible logic and aesthetic.
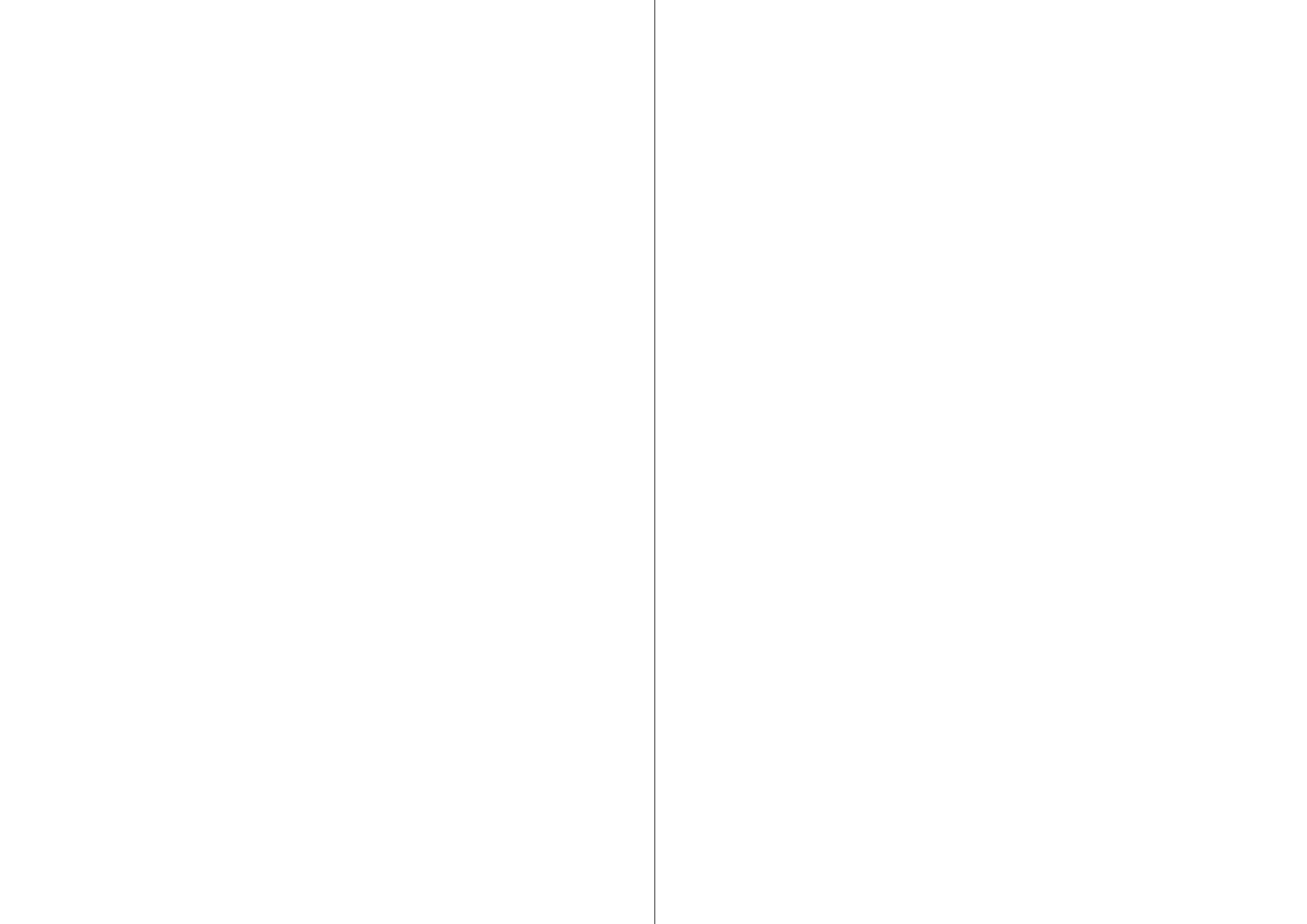
Stefan Jonsson

INSIDE THE FIRE

Collective and Individual in Anna Ådahl's Art

23

Here, fire is a living crowd
— Elias Canetti

Collective and individual. Between them, the drama of democracy is played out. From the French revolution until today, the practice of politics has to a large extent consisted in keeping the masses at a distance from the city center. Those in power have wanted to stop them from penetrating into the headquarters and disturbing the deliberations. At times, they have also attempted to organize the masses, and they had nothing against being greeted, lauded and carried forth on the arms of the people.

The reason that the mass is one of the most important political phenomena of modernity is that modernity is the era of democratization and urbanization. The mass is a product of democracy, which levelled out all hierarchies, rendered all citizens equal, and placed political decision-making in the hands of the majority. The mass is also a product of the big city, where different classes were crowded in the same street, where bodies were pressed up against bodies irrespective of social strata. However, we could also claim the opposite: that both democracy and urbanization from the outset were products of the mass. The big city was the societal form, and democracy the political form, where the majority, the many first became visible for those who had up until this point had the privilege to interpret, shape and govern the world.

The leading circles wished to hold on to this privilege. In order to retain it, they did not hesitate to depict the masses as controlled by their emotions, unwise and dangerous. A number of methods and tools were developed for suppressing the masses with violence and extinguishing them. Other methods and tools were developed for purifying the masses and transforming them into people, movement, or party. Some of these methods and tools form the starting point for Anna Ådahl's works. For example, we see a riot barrier, a megaphone, and a cone consisting of steel pipe rings that become narrower at the top.

What is the use of these objects? Perhaps we could see them as instruments for sorting. The barrier separates man from beast, law-abiding citizens from violent activists, natives from foreigners, one group from the other. The megaphone, in turn, amplifies both the commands of the police officer and the slogans of the demonstrator. And the peculiar cone? It is a scaffold onto which a group of people is supposed to climb and together form a human pyramid

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and be photographed. It was designed by Soviet artist Rodchenko in 1936, when he tried to invent new ways of shaping and designing the socialist collective.

In Rodchenko's days, there existed an established belief that the collective was something larger and more important than the individual. The collective was a new life form. In order to understand this life form, it was necessary to develop a new kind of philosophy of society. In order to represent it, one had to invent a new politics. And in order to shape it, it was necessary to create a new art. This is why the period between the wars is so rich with political, philosophical and aesthetic experiments. Regardless of whether they came from the right or the left, they all aimed to give a form to the collective. For example, some of them started to experiment with collage and photomontage, assembling suggestive visual diagrams for the mass man of the new era. Anna Ådahl returns to this practice in her own collage works, which resemble postmodern replies to similar works by the dada artists or by László Moholy-Nagy or John Heartfield. In these works, we see the masses as the ornament of the new age.

Between masses and individual, historical reflection also oscillates. Is history driven by great personalities, Individuals with a capital "I", who make the right decisions at critical moments? Or is it driven by the anonymous collectives, which can only be discerned in numbers, statistics and demography? Suddenly, the city is empty. In the next moment, it is flooded with refugees? Suddenly, great numbers migrate? In the next moment, they all press against the barrier, which abruptly collapses. Then a wall falls, hundreds of thousands overflow the borders, and the political landscape will never be the same.

And between masses and individual, art history moves. Art history, it could be claimed, appeared in its present form when the concept of art was placed on the side of the individual against the masses. Starting from this point, the artwork became the same as a unique aesthetic object, signed by a unique individual, while other types of images and objects were turned into anonymous craft, peasant art, folk art or — mass culture.

But what happens if the artwork, as the German critic Walter Benjamin wrote, is "absorbed by the masses"? In Anna Ådahl's video work *Adversary*,[p159] a sole individual is placed in front of the camera. But she does not act as an individual. Her posture and all of her gestures are given their significance by an absent collective.

Only in relation to these other, invisible bodies do we understand what she does. Undoubtedly this is the case with every person. Even in her loneliness she preserves the physiognomy and the gestures that all surrounding but now absent persons have imprinted on her.

Masses or individual? This is the fateful question of our time, wrote the authors of the Swedish Functionalist and Modernist manifesto *acceptera* ■2 in 1930. For the Swedish, progressive Functionalists of the 1930s, the aim was to develop a living, a design and a society where each part of the masses was treated as a unique person capable of realizing her own possibilities. However, since there were so many persons, the measures had to be launched on a massive scale, or a mass scale.

If we distance ourselves from our fellow human beings, they are transformed into a faceless mass. If we approach them, we can see that each part of the mass has its own characteristic traits. Therefore we cannot choose between masses and individual. They both exist at the same time. The masses appear and disappear depending on what distance we place between ourselves and society. The same holds for the individual. Where the one ceases, the other begins.

Whether society appears as mass or as individual subjects depends, then, on the spectator's gaze. What is singular about Anna Ådahl's work is that it teaches us to swiftly shift between the perspectives, or even to adapt both of them at once. In this way, her aesthetics contains a political pedagogy. Nowadays we are taught from our early years to take the individual for granted as the fundament of society. But why not instead look at society itself as the fundament for society, and therefore for the individual? In the beginning there is the social space and the community. The kind of human subjectivity that we call individual is a late invention, which remains secondary in relation to the world we have inherited from the great masses of the dead, and where the individual, whether she likes it or not, remains incorporated in the great masses of the living.

The worn-out objects that Anna Ådahl shows in her sculpture work *Public Matter*[p109] remind us of these absent but nevertheless everywhere-present collectives. The work consists of ready-mades, but the point is not the one we have learnt in art history, that these things question the art institution — ordinary objects are introduced into the white cube and thereby place both the world and art in an estranging light. The point, instead, is to place the relationship

between individual and masses in a new light. Hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions of people have earlier touched and held the same objects in their hands. Unintentionally but still according to a strict social logic, they have together formed, bent, scratched and worn these handles, fences and pieces of wood. The marks in the public matter constitute the text of the collective, which Anna Ådahl wants the spectator to read.

In this way, we are close to the secret of these remarkable images, sculptures, installations and video works. The last decades have seen a growing interest in the artworld for social and political processes. The attempts to give sensible form to the abstract phenomenon called "society" become more and more numerous — perhaps because the politicians themselves have given up and to a greater extent equal society with market. Some of the most famous names in this movement could be Anselm Kiefer, Barbara Kruger, Christian Boltanski and Andreas Gursky. In their art we do not find any individuals in the proper sense, but large-scaled historical processes where bodies swarm around each other, place themselves in different constellations and form different types of collectives.

   Anna Ådahl shares their interest in the "masses". She places herself on the side of the collectives. But she proceeds in a more analytic fashion. She does not try to expose the masses as such. She makes no portraits of historical collectives, classes or groups. She seldom refers to specific social movements. Instead she recreates the collective from the traces it has left in public space. She shows that the public space, even when it is empty and still, is a trace after the volatile, political matter of the masses. With her objects and re-stagings, she therefore reaches down to the deeper grammar of political and social life. Elias Canetti spoke of the crystals of the masses, those fundamental social forms that according to him could be discerned in almost every human action. Anna Ådahl searches for something similar. But in her case we should talk, instead, of the traces of the masses. The traces are everywhere. But precisely for this reason they are not visible before they are separated from their contexts, framed and exposed.

   Few, if any, persons figure in Anna Ådahl's photographs. Her installations, too, are sparse, strict and almost empty of human presence. Around these works, a social space arches, which they constantly refer to and evoke. The artworks are traces of past mass manifestations and, at the same time, supply us with moulds

for coming collectives. They refer to a place that was once filled with people and that will perhaps soon again be crowded. They also show that stillness is the strongest and silence the most talking in places that were once packed with people, but that are now deserted, and will perhaps soon be filled again. Filled with people who force their way though to clear away the barriers.

The barriers? As I said earlier some of Anna Ådahl's works consist of sorting mechanisms. Or, with another word, of *borders*. Understood in this way, we can also see how she approaches the great questions of our time, which all seem to concern borders. Territorial borders: Israel's wall against the Palestinians, the barrier between the US and Mexico, the border between the EU and the "welfare parasites". Borders between civilizations and religions, established by political scientists and security experts. Monetary borders, customs regulations and investment obstacles, discussed and debated by economists. Cultural, ethnic and sexual borders, investigated by sociologists and humanists.

   Even the more pressing problems of society — alcohol taxes, immigration, trafficking, cultures of honour, agriculture subventions, "social tourism", capital evasion, terrorism, veil bans, racism, the spread of firearms or prison breaks — are in the last instance caused by the existence somewhere of a border which is either too closed or too open. The borders spread out, and they do so literally. Soon they will cover society as a whole.

   But what is a border? That there are borders means, fundamentally, that there are identities. Whoever delimits a piece of land, a life form, a society, or a value, gives it an identity and defines its place in the order of being. Borders exist because borders are drawn, and borders are drawn in order to delimit identities — and the first border which is drawn, and which always continues to be drawn, and which is today drawn in a more strict way than since long, stems from the crude separation of similar from dissimilar, man from beast, ourselves from the others.

   Even the Garden of Eden had gates. Illuminated manuscripts from the Middle Ages depict the border as a city wall guarded by angels with swords and halberds. The myth of original sin recounts how man was thrown out of paradise so that she was then forced to stand in line at the Pearly Gates with prayers and letters of indulgence which could give her back a place in the circle of angels — a bit like today's *sans papiers*, which must persuade the authorities

and produce certificates of legitimate reasons for seeking refuge, and of confirmed language skills, before she can be accepted among the legitimate Westerners.

Sometimes the borders are clearly visible: a fence with the sign "Unauthorized access forbidden". But more often they are invisible: we note them first when we transgress them. Someone giggles or raises their eyebrows. Someone rushes towards you, screams halt and brings down the halberd. You are taken in custody, imprisoned, thrown out, in the worst case killed.

The border is the place of violence, writes the French philosopher Étienne Balibar. There, the politicians must get their hands dirty. There, the police bring out the tear gas and the truncheons. In the age of nationalism, where there is a presupposed idea that each society should preferably consist of one single people that inhabits one single territory and is governed by one single state, the sorting process has been accelerated. Each attempt to unify the people with a big "P" engenders another people which will in due time be detached and stripped of their rights — and in modern times, this people has been designated as a mass, a word that claims to justify the exclusion which it at the same times enforces. The masses are human beings. The masses also designate a zone in the periphery of society — society's margin, where the order is dissolved and passes over into the barbaric or the wild. Each society needs such a border in order to define its own normative centre where everything is supposed to happen according to reason and where all citizens are individuals.

Anna Ådahl approaches these limits and this periphery, and invites the spectator to follow her along, to discover her place within the collective creation that is called history. Around the known world, where we have established ourselves in peace and calm, just outside of the border, a circle of burning fires can be seen. We are surrounded by the masses. We are also part of the masses, with torches in our hands, on our way to storm the headquarters.

2007
Installation
Mixed media

In *Staging Independence* Anna Ådahl displays the props and the scenography with which the people and the mass are staged and stage themselves. The installation consists of a number of works in different media which refer to techniques for organization and control of masses, and for representation of the people as a spectacle. A central work is *Human Pyramid*, a 1:1 reconstruction of a structure made to carry a mass of people, inspired by a photography by Rodchenko, *Female Pyramid* from 1936. In *Staging independence* one can also see *Democracy*, a series of photographs of peoples' parks documenting their architecture and scenography, *Crowd Control* and *Loudspeaker*, two objects normally used to direct and control a crowd's movements, and the video *Fire*, which implicitly refers to Elias Canetti's analysis of the fire as the symbol for the crowds inner desire and logic.

Staging Independence
Bonniers Konsthall, Stockholm, Sweden,
2008. Espace d'Art Contemporain La
Tôlerie, Clermont-Ferrand, France, 2008

Crowd Control, 2007–8
Borrowed objects, metal
Espace d'Art Contemporain La Tôlerie,
Clermont-Ferrand, France, 2008. ak28,
Stockholm, Sweden, 2007

Fire, 2007
Video (loop)

Human Pyramid, 2007
Sculpture, metal, size variable depending
on the exhibition space
ak28, Stockholm, Sweden, 2007. Espace
d'Art Contemporain La Tôlerie, Clermont-
Ferrand, France, 2008

Loudspeaker, 2007
Non-functional object, mixed media
Appr. 50×100 cm
Bonniers Konsthall, Stockholm, Sweden,
2008. ak28, Stockholm, Sweden, 2007

Sven-Olov Wallenstein

MASS AND MIMESIS

45

I.

When the category of the "crowd" entered the language of psychology and social science, perhaps for the first time in systematical fashion in the works of Gustave Le Bon and Gabriel Tarde at the end of the 19th century, it was already preceded by many artistic and literary renderings, spanning the whole spectrum from ecstatic affirmations of anonymity and dispersal, to desperate attempts at safeguarding the aloofness of the artist in the face of a threatening absorption. Baudelaire famously integrates both of these moments into his theory of the painter of modern life, who lives in the tension between loss of self and self-preservation. Casting the today rather unknown illustrator Constantin Guys as the quintessential "painter of modern life," an artist who can only extract his vital energies by throwing himself into the crowd and immersing himself in the spectacle, Baudelaire writes:

> The crowd is his element, as the air is that of birds and water of fishes. His passion and his profession are to become one flesh with the crowd. For the perfect flâneur, for the passionate spectator, it is an immense joy to set up the house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of movement, in the midst of the fugitive and the infinite. ⟨…⟩ Thus the lover of universal life enters into the crowd as though it were an immense reservoir of electrical energy. Or we may liken him to a mirror as vast as the crowd itself; or to a kaleidoscope gifted with consciousness, responding to each one of its movements and reproducing the multiplicity of life and flickering grace of all the elements of life. He is an "I" with an insatiable appetite for the "non-I," at every instant rendering and explaining it in a picture, which is always unstable and fugitive.[1]

In the first step, the appetite of the I for the non-I leads to a dissolution of the ego, or rather to a blurring of the limit between subject and object

1. Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, trans. Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon, 1995), 9f. T. J. Clark emphasizes the idea of "spectacle" in *The Painter of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and his Followers* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), and pinpoints the role of Impressionism and Postimpressionism as active contributions to the production of a new urban space, where the experience of crowds and masses are crucial.

in the movement of absorption. But the peculiar capacity of the artist is that he is also able to take a step back and reflect on his immersion, and Baudelaire thus provides us with an inversion of the first scene: "now it is evening," he continues, and "at a time when others are asleep, Monsieur G. is bending over his table, darting on to a sheet of paper the same glance that a moment ago was directing towards external things." In this reclusive and nocturnal space "the external world is reborn upon his paper, natural and more than natural, beautiful and more than beautiful," the "phantasmagoria has been distilled from nature," and "all the raw materials with which the memory has loaded itself are put in order, ranged and harmonized, and undergo that forced idealization which is the result of a childlike perceptiveness."[2]

In Baudelaire's aesthetic these two movements, abandon and withdrawal, relate to each other as the "fugitive" and the "eternal" elements in his equation of fashion and modernity, which only together make up perfect beauty: just as the immersion in the spectacle, the evanescent and ephemeral make up the outer shell without which the inner and eternal essence would remain abstract and lifeless, incapable of moving us, deprived of both time and space. This is no doubt a most precarious balance, not least because all those techniques and procedures that had hitherto defined painting as a fine art — the presence of the model, the concentration and meditation on the motif, the whole institution of the painterly gaze that gradually transfigures the object and resuscitates it on the canvas — seem to evaporate in the face of "modern life," within which they appear as ineffective and obsolete, and must be reconstructed on the basis of fleeting memory images. Attention and the focused gaze only become possible *afterwards*, after a first distraction and dispersal where the sensory impressions are received in a disorderly manner, which is at once the modern artist's condition of possibility and the threat of his imminent destruction.

But what, then, should we say on a more theoretical level of this crowd, this "immense reservoir of electric energy," to which the artist must respond like a mirror, or a kaleidoscope that reproduces its teeming multiplicity of life? To many social theorists of the period the very word

suggested something akin to Baudelaire's experience, a paradoxical entity just as fleeting and evanescent, as it is substantial and massive. In Tarde's version, the crowd is a result of unpredictable micro-behaviors; it is something that *emerges* and *coalesces* through the interaction of molecules in aberrant motion — but once it has acquired its form and achieved a certain momentum, it can no longer be stopped. As Tarde's master Leibniz shows, the wave may indeed consist of drops of water, but once you hit it at a certain speed, it will become just as hard as rock and smash the boat to pieces.[3]

This influence of Leibniz on Tarde has recently been highlighted, and in a text like 'Monadologie et sociologie' we can see him setting out a whole Leibnizian program for a new social science, which begins from small perceptions, differential relations, and integrates consciousness in a larger whole.[4] This "new Tarde" has attracted considerable attention among social scientists and philosophers, to the point that some have even referred to a kind of "neo-Tardianism."[5] Once almost wholly eclipsed by the fame of Durkheim and his objectivist view of "social facts" as entities that transcend individual consciousness, and rejected because of his alleged reliance on psychology, individualism, and spiritualism, Tarde has indeed returned, although today his work tends to be read in a way that cuts across the alternative between individual psychology and

3. See Gilles Deleuze's commentary to the Leibnizian theory of the "elasticity" of bodies, in 'Le Pli. Leibniz et le baroque' (Paris: Minuit, 1988), 8f.
4. 'Monadologie et sociologie' (1893), in *Oeuvres de Gabriel Tarde, vol. I*, with a preface by Éric Alliez and a postface by Maurizio Lazzarato (Paris: Synthélabo, 1999). The republication of Tarde's works, led by Éric Alliez, has of course been of tremendous importance for the contemporary reassessment.
5. For an overview of the recent reception, see David Toews, 'The New Tarde: Sociology After the End of the Social,' *Theory Culture Society*, 2003 (20(5): 81–98. Today, many lay claim to the legacy of Tarde, almost as if it were a belated corroboration of his theory of imitation as the basis of fashion: from the actor network theory of Bruno Latour to the systems theory of Niklas Luhmann, sets of references and legacies that account for the return of Tarde are being constructed in multiple and often contradictory ways. I say this not in order to bemoan "intellectual fashions" — which would indeed be misguided in the present context, since few thinkers have to such an extent as Tarde emphasized the role of fashion

in the complex imbrication of invention and imitation that constitutes culture — but in order to make it possible to reflect on the conditions for Tarde's return, which I think have to do with the necessity to rethink our inherited conceptions of individuality and collectivity in the light of current modes of exertion of power in the age of telematics and electronic space. In most of these reappraisals, however, Deleuze's famous footnote in *Difference and Repetition* has become the standard reference. Here, already in 1968, Deleuze rejects the psychologistic reading, and suggests that "the little ideas of little men" and the "interferences between imitative currents" constitutes a "microsociology" already at the level of the person: "hesitation understood as an 'infinitesimal social opposition' or invention as an 'infinitesimal social adaptation.'" *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (London: Athlone Press, 1994), 313–314, note 3. Equally important — although for some reason often overlooked — references to Tarde can be found in *Le Pli*, 147 (on the relation between the ontology of "being" and the "echology" of "having"), and in the 1986 monograph on Foucault (see note 14 below).

2. Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life*, 88f, 11.

systems analysis, and locates a different level of research, a "pure sociology" that is also a "micro-sociology" of deviant behaviors and minuscule displacements. Tarde's analyses both of how actions are reproduced through processes of imitation, and of how transformations are brought about by acts of invention made by "small men," defy the opposition between individual and group, and locate the decisive events on a level where differences and repetitions of small gestures and postures, turns of conversation and minute shifts come together in order to form those entities that we perceive as self-contained subjects with their beliefs and habits. "Let us not forget," Tarde writes in *The Laws of Imitation* (1890), "that every invention and every discovery consists of the interference in somebody's mind of certain old pieces of information that have generally been handed down by others."[6] On the basis of this far-reaching idea of mimetic processes, he can ask: "*What is society?*" and he does not hesitate to respond: "*I have answered: Society is imitation.*"[7] Imitation follows its own logic, and is what constitutes the source of authority and power: "Three quarters of the time," Tarde says, "we obey a man because we seem him obeyed by others."[8]

If individuals are in fact nothing more than interferences of repetitions, then something similar can also be said of institutions: Certain traits are repeated, they become successful, and acquire a "fit" with existing customs, which in turn are themselves made up of sedimented repetitions. Tarde significantly stresses the importance that urban centers and their particularly intensified forms of spatial interaction have in the modern world, where they have come to form "aristocracies of place" usurping the role previously placed by courts: Paris, Tarde writes, "unquestionably rules more royally and more orientally over the provinces than the court

ever ruled over the city."[9] In the social space of modernity the "imitative rays" however propagate horizontally rather than vertically, their velocity increases constantly, and they thrive on new forms of communication, all of which explains why the phenomenon of "fashion" has become so pervasive in contemporary life, and Tarde here obviously situates himself in the wake of Baudelaire's prophetic remarks. Fashion, in Tarde's analysis, is the fundamental feature of a kind of hypersociality, which also, in a twist that is surely not unique to Tarde (a similar tension organizes Baudelaire's description of the painter of modern life) although it in him attains a particularly acute and exacerbated form, is at once the fundamental *manifestation* and *destruction* of the social.[10] This tension can then be split up in two opposed origins of the social, which Tarde locates in the family, and in the crowd or "mob" (*foule*);[11] in the first, imitation originates in the father, in the second, in the leader; the family conserves customs and stability, whereas the crowd introduces a revolutionary potential, precisely because its imitative logic is based in the ephemeral quality of fashion that always promotes the new; the family has its base in rural life, the crowd in the city. The crowd, Tarde writes in a passage that brings out its dangerous potential, is a "gathering of heterogeneous moments, unknown to each other," brought about by a "spark of passion" that "electrifies" a "confused mass," so that "noise becomes a voice," a "single animal, a wild beast without a name, which marches to its goal with an irresistible finality."[12]

It is thus not surprising that the important part of Tarde's work that is dedicated to the "crowd" (*la foule*), displays a profound ambivalence,

6. Tarde, *The Laws of Imitation*, trans. Elsie Clews Parsons (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1962), 382.
7. *Ibid.*, 74, Tarde's italics. Tarde experiments with many definitions of imitation, ranging from more dramatic and psychologically charged ones, such as "*a kind of somnambulism*" (87), to formal determinations such as "action at a distance of one mind upon another" (xiv), which eventually leads him to downplay the role played by suggestion in the earlier texts. In all of these definitions there is however a stress on unconscious processes, and a concomitant critique of the idea that "man imitates because he wishes to" and the "illusion of free will" (193f).

8. Tarde, *L'opinion et la foule* (Paris: PUF, reed. 1989), 123. One of the most important vehicles of imitation, Tarde suggests, is *conversation* (30, 87), and it must be studied in all of its empirical nuances, including the differences introduced by various rural and urban milieus. Proust's exploration of the subtle and rapid shifts in language, from the intimacy of love to the seeming emptiness of salon talk, where the individual's own linguistic universe is shown to already in itself contain a multiplicity of points of view, and communication often occurs below the level of conscious intentions, could in this sense be taken as one of most magnificent literary developments of Tarde's research program.

9. Tarde, *The Laws of Imitation*, 225f.
10. I borrow this analysis from Christian Borch's lucid analysis in 'Urban Imitations: Tarde's Sociology Revisited,' *Theory Culture Society*, 2005, 22(3): 81–100. See also Borch's overview of other early crowd sociologies, 'The Exclusion of the Crowd: The Destiny of a Sociological Figure of the Irrational', *European Journal of Social Theory*, 2006, 9(1): 83–102. Borch proposes that the waves of imitation, opposition, and adaptation that traverse urban space might be analyzed along the lines of Henri Lefebvre's idea of "rhytmanalysis," which could account for the continuous displacement that makes the repetition that occurs within imitation into a production of difference rather than identity (in a way which obviously comes very close to Deleuze). This suggestion also points to important role played by concrete rhythmic structures (chanting, clapping, moving in lockstep, etc.) in the formation of crowds; on such "rhythmic crowds," see Elias Canetti, *Crowds and Power*, trans. Carol Stewart (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1984), 31ff. For Lefebvre's theory, see *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everday Life*, trans. Stuart Elden and Gerald Moore (London: Continumm, 2004).
11. Tarde, *Penal Philosophy*, trans. Rapelje Howell (Montclair, NJ: Patterson Smith, 1968), 325. This unmistakable paranoid quality that pertains to some of Tarde's statements is further aggravated by the use of "mob" for *foule*, which is common in older translations. I will here stick to the more neutral "crowd," although it is true that many of Tarde's remarks could warrant the use of "mob."
12. *Ibid.*, 323.

even anxiety, which was felt by most social theorists of the period in the face of the crowd phenomenon. The emergence of the crowd was a constant source of fear, and arguably it not only impacted on the emerging social sciences, particularly in their way of conceptualizing urban space, but in fact constituted the fundamental and decisive experience.[13] Tarde's negative view of the crowd phenomenon is evidenced by the fact that he develops many of his ideas in the framework of criminology and penal philosophy: particular and strange crimes, he suggests, for which it seems impossible to find sufficient motives in the individual perpetrators, appear to spread like ripples through society, as if they were fashions.[14] On the other hand, he notes that the at least theoretically conceivable perfection of the social must have a form that is structurally similar to, perhaps even *indistinguishable* from, the crowd, i.e., an "intense concentration of urban life" within which creative ideas are "instantaneously transmitted to all good minds throughout the city."[15] As if to contain this possibility, Tarde always stresses the importance of the family, the father, and imitation through custom, which must be able to regulate and contain the amorphous sociality of the crowd, and to make sure that the "voice" that emerges out of the "noise" always retains an echo of *his master's voice*, as it were; but also, on a level where the father now reappears in the guise of Public Reason, the possible elevation of the crowd into a *public*, i.e. a collectivity based in a purely spiritual interaction and cohesion that transfigures urban space into a more ideal entity. As such, these rational publics (examples of which Tarde finds in the readers of newspapers) form the *telos* of modernity, although each one

13. For a history of theoretical reflections of the crowd in early social theory, see Jaap van Ginneken, *Crowds, Psychology, and Politics, 1871–1899* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).
14. Deleuze at one point picks up the thread from the footnote *in Difference and Repetition* and points to the proximity between Foucault's idea of "small inventions" and Tarde: both of them focus on "diffuse and infinitesimal relations, neither great totalities nor great men, but small ideas of small men, the signature of a bureaucrat, a new local custom, a linguistic deviation, a visual twist that propagates itself." *Foucault* (Paris: Minuit, 1986), 81, note 6. Foucault's lectures series from 1975 on abnormality constitutes an interesting case of this, since he here in fact discusses a famous murder case from the 1825 that was also highlighted by Tarde (who is not

mentioned by Foucault) as a case of social imitation: Henriette Cornier, a young woman who seemingly for no reason cut the throat of her neighbour's daughter, after which "other children's nurses yielded, for no other reason than this, to an irresistible desire to cut the throats of their employer's children" (*The Laws of Imitation*, 340). The absence of an understandable motif and the debate around the Cornier case, Foucault suggests, become a reason for introduction of psychiatry into penal law, and for the development of the notion of instinct, which shows the importance played by small "inventions" in the creation of grand ideas. See Foucault *Abnormal*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Picador, 2003), 109–136.
15. Tarde, *The Laws of Imitation*, 70.

of them will always remain a "potential crowd"[16] that might fall back into brute physical space and the coarse interaction of bodies. Tarde eventually suggests that the true problem cannot be to prevent the formation of crowds, which would run against the very nature of the social, but to prevent publics from regressing to crowds and allow crowds to evolve into publics, and that "profound research" remains to be undertaken with respect to the exact relation between these two forms of the social.

II.
The Metropolis, everyone seemed to think, would soon spin out of control unless we develop *techniques* for surveying and disciplining the unruly multiplicity of individuals that traverse it. The anxiety that motivated the early social theorists has through their work entered into a kind of general social unconscious: once the individual has been liberated from his organic inclusion in the rural *Gemeinschaft*, he will be thrown into the aleatory spaces of the *Gesellschaft*, where he will bond with complete strangers, create new and temporary liaisons, and become susceptible to the irrational mechanisms of "imitation" that Tarde diagnosed, now understood as something purely negative. He will, in short, become a member of all possible crowds that can form everywhere, and someone whose behavior signals a new type of irrationality, where the "crowd" overtakes the rational behavior of the "public." There is always a potential violent deraiting inherent in all kinds of staging of social space, an oscillation that must be contained and controlled, so that its energy can be led through the conduits of a possible public — and the means for this containment will indeed be many "small inventions," even down to technical gadgets that can be put to use in the project of public formation.

The first part of Anna Ådahl's diptych *Staging Independence*[P33] may be taken as showing us the props for such a violent staging. The objects on display refer to different techniques for crowd control, or ways in which the crowd has been understood as a potential and malleable mass. This is the case of *Human Pyramid*,[P38] a structure constructed to carry a mass of people. It refers us back to a photograph by Rodchenko, *Female Pyramid*[6] (1936), from a period when Constructivist art,

16. Tarde, *L'opinion et la foule*, 39.

willingly or not, was moving into a propagandistic phase, and when artists like Rodchenko and Lissitzky were re-functioning their techniques in the service of a violently authoritarian state apparatus. Rodchenko's form has here been returned to a more abstract or neutral state, and we might be tempted to approach it simply as abstract sculpture, or perhaps as belonging to a new "laboratory phase," to use the term employed by the Constructivists themselves to denote the preparatory period of formal exercises, before the work could be put to its true use: to design the behavior of the urban masses.

A more benign facet of mass control can be seen in a work like *Democracy*,[P57] a series of photographs of the well-known Swedish institution People's Park (*Folkpark*), something in between a fun fair and place of political rallying. Less eerie than the scaffolding for the human pyramid, perhaps even provoking a certain tenderness and nostalgia, these photographs show us the architecture and props of the Swedish welfare state, which indeed also was concerned with control, although in a much more fluid and perhaps subtle fashion. Other works refer in a more generic way to the idea of masses and crowds: *Crowd Control*[P37] and *Loudspeaker*,[P40] whereas the video *Fire*[P36] alludes to Elias Canetti's analysis of the logic of crowds in his monumental book *Masse und Macht*, a work which draws upon many of the early ideas of the emerging social sciences from the turn of the century.

The "independence" being staged in this complex installation could be taken both as the emancipation of a certain *individuality*, which would lead to a double conflict, both with the organic order that is negated, and with the crowd that threatens to engulf the subject, or as the independence and political autonomy of the *masses* (the class, the race, the new political Subject of whatever nature it may have), which in their turn require a set of instruments to become disciplined into a coherent unity. In a certain way the installation is as it were waiting to be filled, perhaps with our fears and anxieties, but also our fascination and longing for future collective orders. It proposes a machine with which we can think, but also fantasize and dream; it provides a negative of the crowd, of the urban masses.

The film *In Dependence*[P75] (2008) creates an assemblage of two highly different visual sources. On the one hand, there are scenes from film

history, drawn from films by Eisenstein and King Vidor, Beatles concerts, Broadway musicals, staged political events in the Stalinist form of the "society of spectacle," the parades, etc. These are then pitted against a series of scenes showing two individuals, locked up in an apartment, who mimic the movements and behaviors of the crowd, imitations and adaptations, in a peculiar *pas de deux*, moving from a sense of isolation to the acting out of physical contact and even violence.

In one sense, the film may be read as taking us through the three classical steps in the life of the crowd, seen from the point of view of individuality: the moment of participation and the initial abandon of the self, the collective energy unleashed when the new transpersonal unity is formed, and the ensuing moment of disruption, when individuality is regained, wills begin to diverge, and violence now spreads just as contagiously as mimetic fusion in the first moment.

But perhaps we may also see it, in tune with some of the indications by Tarde referred to above, in terms of different *rhythms*, the differences and repetitions in gestures and movements by which a provisional identity is formed in the first place, as the instable genesis of minds — two minds in the case of the film, if we are to trust the boundaries provided by skin and flesh, which is by no means sure. As Tarde underlines, the difference and delay in hesitation, produced at the intersection of two imitative rays, already makes each every individual into a society. The question is neither the individual nor the collective, as Tarde might say, but the small imitative rays that pass through them, that intersect at the point of a local individuality and produce a hesitation, a fluctuation that traverses both mind and body, and may occasion an "invention" that in turn will emit new rays.

2007
Colour photographs
28 × 21 cm
90 of 240 images

Federico Nicolao and Anna Ådahl

IN DEPENDENCE

— a conversation

63

Anna Ådahl's *In Dependence*[p75] at first left me slightly disconcerted. In the film, two people are confronted with one another in a closed room, sometimes with a sort of distance, sometimes in direct contact. Their fears, their expectations, above all their silence, their mere existence, seem to be the objects of Ådahl's investigation, which troubles me but whose content escapes me. While there is for me, the spectator, no clearly legible relation of cause and effect between their gestures or states of mind, I find myself gradually more interested in the camera work, whose sharp attention is directed toward the actions of the two mysterious figures, played by David Mjönes and a stunning and intense Elin Klinga.

As prescribed by the art of cinema, facing this film we look up at the screen from where we are sitting, and we watch: we watch time pass. Its arrival and departure seem to remain the subject — for me still mysterious — of the film. Hinting at a narrative (the atmosphere brings several classics of domestic cinema to mind), the structure that the filmmaker has chosen almost does not allow for an interpretation to raise itself above the sequence of events. Evoking the modern cinema of idleness, a woman and a man, in circumstances that at once address us and escape us, are confronted with a remarkable experience of presence. The mystery, however, is multiple: the observer is suddenly rhythmically torn away from the context by images other than those filmed in the interior, which remains the principal set for the film: mass scenes and images of crowds appear, which belong sometimes to the register of the documentary (shots from a Beatles' concert), and sometimes to fiction (extracts from *King Kong*, and from films by King Vidor, Busby Berkeley and David Cronenberg, among others). Their connection to the rest at first seems rather elusive. After a while we arbitrarily, almost magically begin to discern how the actors of the film, by their small movements and gestures, in their own way create a relation to the mass scenes, and launch an investigation into what remains of the intimate when the individual mixes with the crowd that is presented by the artist in different forms in the extracts.

For almost imperceptible reasons, Anna Ådahl proceeds by

continually sliding from anonymity to presence and vice versa.

The sensibility with which the artist scrutinizes the faces of her protagonists inside the apartment is interspersed with radical changes that confront the viewer with what I believe is an intentional form of uncertainty. This is the reason I felt an urge to pose a number of questions to the director.

When did you begin to think about your film?

That would be in 2006, during a month I spent in Finland on a research grant. At this time I already worked with the notion of the crowd, but it was there that I began to feel attracted specifically to the relationship between the individual and the mass, that this relationship began to appear differently to me. From there I had the idea of a work concerned with the double play between wanting to belong to a group or a set, and wanting to differentiate oneself; between emphasizing and preserving the individual, and momentarily dissolving it in something else. It was a question of natural, normal instincts, common to everyone and absolutely ordinary in our experience of society. Without evoking the extremes it is sufficient to think of the oscillation between conformism and singularity within most of us. And at the same time, the individualism of contemporary thinking, which is tangible and within which many of us feel at ease, and from which my own identity stems, fascinated me; and at a certain moment this polarity seemed to me an excellent point of departure for a project that aimed to establish a certain tension.

In principle, then, there is a theme, which was capital for 20th century art and in particular for literature: the subject's oscillation between, on the one hand, its auto-definition and on the other hand its network of relations to its times and to society (which may also define it other-

wise). Are there any authors who have influenced your project? Are there artists or writers who have been more important than others for your research?

Of course I have been influenced by a great number of authors, however, what immediately felt necessary was to face the sensation that one could not treat communities as vast and difficult to define as countries, nations or social groups, without first straightening out this notion of autonomy within a network, which characterizes the individual in our times. I speak of nations or countries, but the discourse is also valid for any social group of a certain importance. I wished, then, to allow a certain number of echoes of theories that have been fundamental for the project to emerge in my research. From the outset, from the point where I made my choice and decided that the title of my film would be *In Dependence*, I wished to play with the ambiguous relationships between dependence and independence.

It was probably Elias Canetti who sparked my desire for reflection. I have always been attracted by his analyses of the individual's behaviour within the crowd. Let us immediately take an example which could perhaps clarify partly what interests me: if someone touches you in a crowd it does not at first scare you in the least; if someone does the same thing in a personal situation or in a small group, something like fear grows in you, connected to other sentiments. When a stranger enters your private space you react, but if the same stranger does the same thing in a crowd situation, your reaction is completely different.

At several occasions the film lingers on scenes of encounters where the touch is registered by the camera and the spectator is slightly troubled, but without knowing why exactly…

Film is an ideal means for creating this type of situations. Which is the dynamics of the crowd? What is the sentiment of an individual who forms part of a crowd and how does she distance herself from it? These are some subjects that Canetti has approached in his books, and that are at the origin of my research, for which I have chosen the moving image as a medium.

At which moment can we speak of a crowd? The inconsistency of the crowd also intrigues me. To understand at which moment it appears and how it dissolves — in the city, the world, a country, or today even in a certain sense on the internet (even though this belongs to another discussion). Is it possible to stage the relationship between the individual and the crowd? This is the question which fascinated me and from which my film was conceived. Can that which belongs to the order of "theory" find a form of representation? The impossibility of this challenge fascinates me.

I have also throughout attempted to discretely refer to certain political behaviours, but without "talking politics", instead approaching the problem from upstream, via its dynamics and the visual mediation of the community.

> How would you describe your film to someone who hasn't seen it?

I prefer to let the spectator watch it. But let's say that, even though this isn't and does not have to be directly explicit, for me the film is rather clearly divided up into three acts: in the first the individual is situated in a relation to the crowd and the protagonist, Elin Klinga, is therefore shot alone; in the second act, the individual is incorporated into the crowd, becomes part of it, empties her own body for the benefit of the mass, and David Mjönes joins Elin Klinga; in the third act, the two are on the screen

together, the individual redefines herself as an individual in relation to the other and the crowd.

Tacitly, then, I have given Elin Klinga the role of the individual and David Mjönes that of the other and then the crowd.

During the shooting we worked a great deal on defining their positions in relation to the themes I wanted to approach through their acting and their presence. Professional actors (and both Elin and David are) works every day in a constant confrontation with crowds. For me, this had a certain importance.

> A strange tension — which is not new in your work — traverses the domestic space: your way of filming the few objects that remain in the room and around the figures, one could say, takes great care to emphasize something unusual and "estranging" — and this often returns in your filmic relationship to the closed space. This time, how did you choose the setting?

I attempted to place the film in the most neutral setting possible. I only chose very functional objects (for example in the kitchen), and the most reduced, neutral furniture. Neutral and anonymous, but at the same time, I'd say, capable of another type of presence.

In order to approach the theme of the relationship between the individual and the crowd with two actors in a film without dialogs and shot in a domestic, private space, it was necessary to isolate ourselves from the spectators, and to proceed to the narrative and the fiction starting from a non-definition of the place.

What I find intriguing in not providing many clues or keys to the spectator is that this can sometimes trigger a true desire for interpretation. I could cite the example of a viewer who left me dumbfounded when she approached

me after a screening in Sweden to discuss the role I, according to her, attributed to the artist in the art world — a subject which was not, at least not consciously, discussed in my film. I find it amusing and very interesting that everyone finds their own paths through the film. For me this indicates a certain degree of success: the film is sufficiently abstract to permit this to happen.

> There is a great deal of work with the space in your film: it is not only a question of emphasizing how it is organized, but also of directing the attention towards the way in which you choose to film it. Are you specifically concerned with the choice of the set and the preparation of the place where you're shooting?

One must, if at all possible, see the film without knowing — but yes, the decision where to place the camera, how and in what type of space, these issues are for me important in the search to obtain the neutrality, this undefinable atmosphere that I hope I have been able to establish in my film. The two persons evolve in a space that is impossible to situate geographically, from which I have tried to subtract all determination. A private but not personal space, for example. This aspect was central for me from the outset, and it has often been so in my films and videos. When I was 19 years old, I saw Merce Cunningham at the Opéra Garnier in Paris, and for me this sparked a consciousness of the importance of the space around the acting body. A space is always a container for actions and ideas, and in *In Dependence* my aim is precisely to film this propagation of actions and ideas in the space.

> How did you choose the archival images that punctuate the film?

My aim was to establish as many perspectives as possible concerning this idea of the crowd. The insertion of these sequences must therefore be understood plastically. For me it's like a collage (a technique that I like a lot and practice) where the scenes are chosen from other films, which stage the crowd, and the ways in which the two persons act in the scenes that I've shot myself are mixed. The cuts are decisive and the chosen sequences have a specific relationship to the scenes with the actors, a relationship that the spectator must find. It is therefore not — above all *not* — a question of creating a logic of illustration, but on the contrary of establishing a dialogue. To begin with, we shot 35 scenes with the actors, and then I had to work carefully with the montage to understand which crowd scenes could create the tension and the communication I was looking for with the images I shot with my two actors. Let me add that a man and a woman (where the man plays the other and the crowd) seemed to me to be the smallest common denominator of the crowd, and therefore of what was then multiplied in the archival images.

For several months I could not force myself to mount the film, and when I began it was the technique of collage that gave me the force to continue. I set off in a number of directions in order to be able to understand the kind of precision that this work merited. It was this logic of composition that guided me. What I was searching for was an equilibrium between different dynamics.

> Do you separate the documentary images from the (predominantly) fictive images to which you have recourse?

No, not really, not in this context. I searched for images that could echo what I asked my actors to interpret, and

subtly evoke their actions. For example, I used Busby Berkeley in order to evoke the problem of the body, the crowd, and the mass ornament, without having to speak of North Korea or the Nazi regime, or of the control of the masses. As one might imagine, this old military choreography interested me greatly for what it led to on Broadway and in Hollywood. Just as *King Kong* interested me — a key moment in the encounter between a crowd and a singularity!

> It should be added that your first artistic projects were already connected to themes that recall those with which you are working today. The dependence of the body on society or on its surroundings is one of the motifs with which you have been occupied since the beginning. I'm thinking of works such as *The Dance* from 1998, or of more recent videos, such as *Gabriella, Sema´* and *Breathing*. And also, to be honest, of an astonishing crucifixion from the very beginning of your career, which you are reluctant to show since you see it as a youthful work. As far as I remember, the crucified body of a young woman there corresponded to the familial context of social expectations and projections. To observe the language of the body in relation to the psychological or physical space that surrounds it — this seems to be one of your most fruitful obsessions.

To value how the body expresses something, the expression of the body, to me seems to demand that we find another way of looking at it, other than the language commonly employed in media. This is the reason for the resistance with which my works have often been met, since their codes are not immediately comprehensible for spectators and critics. I don't know if anyone noted this, but for example the sound of the body has always been

something important for me... All of my earliest projects, from when I went to art school, dealt with the body, approached not from the angle of its eroticism or its sexuality, nor of the desire it could provoke, but from another angle which is very hard to define...

> It seems that in *In Dependence*, there is a focus on Elin Klinga's and David Mjönes' acting. Is the idea that one should turn toward them and concentrate on the structural conflict that is set into play by their bodies in the space?

Difficult to say... I could spend hours trying to define which type of body it is, but it would always be something else... perhaps the poetic body. What I wanted to film was a language of their bodies that would immediately pass beyond spoken language.

> In cinema there is often a fantasy of something that is so precisely dictated in the actor that there is no need for words. To describe this, could you specify further?

I'm interested in emotional or psychological states that can transmit the presence of someone. It's not so much about the question of the gestures or the actions of bodies, as it is about their equilibrium and their communication — and it is precisely in this register that things occur, surprising things regarding the disconcerting relations between the individual and the crowd.

In Dependence

2008
HD video
12 mins

The short film *In Dependence*
mixes newly recorded fictive and
documentary sequences with
archive material from film history.
The fictive sequences examine
the psychological and physical
dynamics of the crowd by show-
ing how two individuals (played
by Elin Klinga and David Mjönes)
act out the behavioral pattern of
the crowd isolated in an abstract,
private space. The documentary
sequences and the quotes from
film history not only let us see the
crowd in scenes that correspond
to the actions of the two indi-
viduals, but also add an historic
dimension, by showing how the
fascination of the crowd has been
a constant in modern culture, from
the hysteria of the pop concert
audience and the elaborate mass
choreography of the Broadway
musical, to the Stalinist commu-
nity's well directed spectacle and
the political manifestation's stag-
ing of the collective will. The three
parts of the film follow different
velocities and rhythms, and repre-
sent separate moments in the
dynamics of the crowd: the self-
denying attraction of belonging,
the collective ecstasy of unity, the
chaos and the melancholic aware-
ness of dissolution.
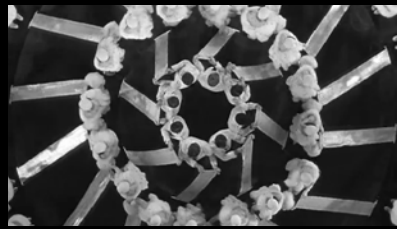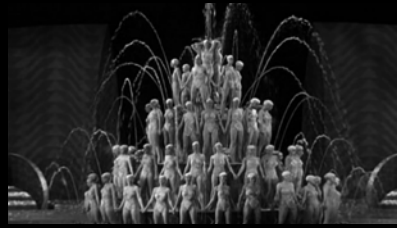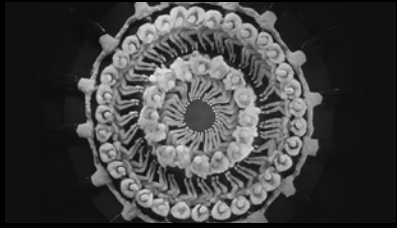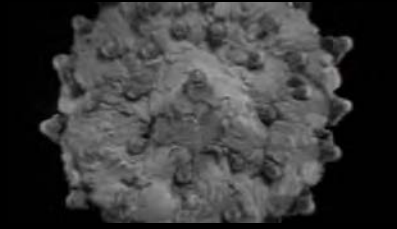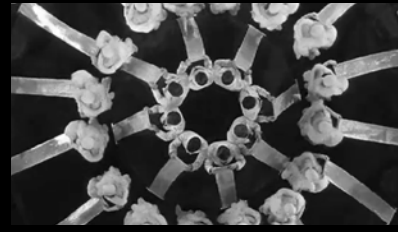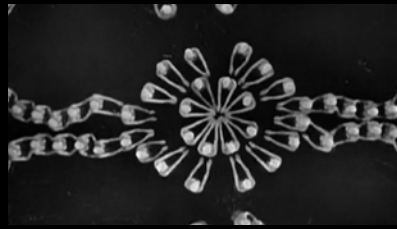
Mara Lee

THE CHILDREN BRING BACK THEIR HORDES

I do not recall my hands
in that city I had no
hands

•

Light grey breathing exhaust fumes
Winter begins at the wrist
ends in March

Narrow amble on the sidewalk
shoving off the tiniest one

A chalk white coat
piece of January,
then a flashing streak of rose —

What is that sudden gleam?
Silk lining
no, the blood red

I did not touch her
I promise. The Acephalous
in this city have no hands.

•

Beneath the paving-stone
there is no beach, ice only
the bare madness of the straight stretch:
    Lose yourself
downwards onto the eggshell white, grazed
scraped kneecaps
The joints rip
my lining surges

Flocking together on the pavement
horde, survey
the sludgy mouths of the children,
gravelled gaze
A sun streak bursting out —
brilliant bowels

The sound of meat transport, wallowing
over on the side
into a mouth
onto a word
swallowing and swallowing,
the incomprehensible clogs in the throat,
    piles up

your stinking
mouth
Siren blue the whole shitload,
hands groping about, extending over —
twinkle little accident
now straddle this crossing
infernal blue light

In my head
eyes, taunt, blasting into this
real   *look*

A dazzling disrupt
a mother, or a mouth —
Street, what is your name?
Hatch out the light from your hand
lustrous spittle
moi, the horde

Her lying there like modern dance
The tilted promise of her neck
searching, gust
the children are bolting, stealing upon,
    dashing round

twitching beats of wings
bird's heart
fluttering in the throat
The slow smell of thawing
Why does it jerk and twist?

City, within the pale of, crypt

Throw a last, killing smile
catch the eye —
launch and expose your rose lining
extend yourself — Rose
make the penultimate warm
this roaring face

Something in long sleeves, something
    slithered down
turned inside out

(the diseases were translated at every
    frontier
the accent was incomprehensible
pig snout, letter pain)

The skies are pressing like a fading bruise
who touches our children when they
    whisper
something about the mother
The sirens,
weaving their way through the mother
emergency rattle, turnout
the worst winter, the shortest day
the longest moment

Shortly you will recognize your home
    obliquely from above
as from an aerial photograph
the clouds resemble loosely clenched
    hands

Student 2005

2006
7 colour photographs
C-print
50×70 cm
Video
5 mins

As the tradition requires in
Sweden, students graduating
from secondary school wear white
caps and celebrate by riding
on truck-beds through the city
centre, playing loud music, danc-
ing, drinking beer and announc-
ing their freedom. The trucks
are decorated with birch leaves,
banners and flags, expressing
their collective concerns as well
as their individual backgrounds.
Both the video and the photo-
graphs have intentionally been
darkened in order to emphasize
the white-capped crowds as an
entity.
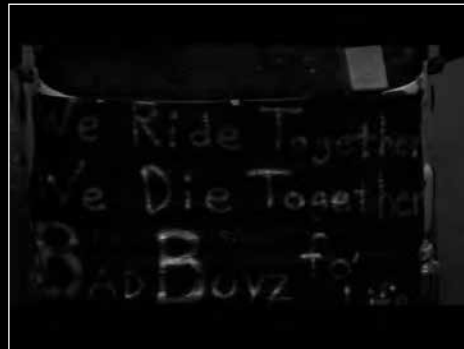
Video
Photographs
Nuke Gallery, Paris,
France, 2006

Fabien Vallos

FIGURES OF UNCONDITION-ALITY

99

Contemporary works seem to derive from a tripe interrogation, which determines their form and structure. There is, to be sure, the question of the status of the work, but also of the operator or the artist, and the question of emptiness and the troublesome question of unconditionality. Anna Ådahl's work too derives from these three formulas. It observes them.

The whole of Anna Ådahl's work observes, examines and scrutinizes the relations between the individual and the number, understood as mass or crowd. It undertakes a sort of investigation of the figures of our contemporary moment that speak of, or indicate, something relating to the individual and the subject. The question of the subject is primordial: it bears on the principle of subjectivation through which it ceaselessly defines and redefines itself. It is a measure of those affects that extend from conditionality — dependence as a form of terror, coercion and corruptibility — to unconditionality, independence as a form of singularity and of ethics. In his *Nichomachean Ethics* Aristotle grasps this movement, the gradation extending from the feeling of corruptibility, *phthartos*, to unconditionality, *autarkeia*. It is this gradual movement that lies at the basis of the perception of the similar and the dissimilar, whose triple figure represents at once the tension constitutive of the crowd and the plastic tension in the works of Anna Ådahl: the figure of proximity, similarity and dissimilarity, or the figure of intimacy, the figure of friendship and intimacy that was understood in such a unique way by Hannah Arendt, and more recently by Pierre-Damien Huyghe.

The characters in the film *In Dependence*[P75] do not experience this figure in itself, but simply provide us with a visual image of it, set in an vacated space. Faced with the exhibition *Staging Independence*,[P31] the spectator should no longer see but assume a position on the (public) stage where the appa-

ratuses that constrain the collective body and the apparatuses of fascination are operative. Anna Ådahl's works abandon space — liberate it — and provide a space where there is nothing but the strange and empty figure of the apparatus.

In the wake of Michel Foucault, it has been noted that every singular figure becomes subjectivized in the face of an apparatus. An apparatus is an economy of strategy: subjectivation means the impossibility to be anything but a subject, in the double sense of this term.

To maintain oneself as a subject, however, means to maintain oneself under the power of dependence, to remain "in dependence" as a figure of the Aristotelian *phthartos*, of a movement and a continual change. Not to maintain oneself as a subject, on the contrary, is the figure of suspension and unconditionality; it is to expose oneself in the figure of independence, staging independence, as the being of *autarkeia* and *syneches*, of unconditionality and of maintaining, in the public space, of the number and the collective.

But it seems as if things were never that simple. We never reach the point where the experience of our state would be, according to Aristotle's paradoxical formula, that of immobile activity: "for there is not only an activity in movement, but also an activity in immobility (*akinesia*), and pleasure consists rather in rest than in movement." The work of Anna Ådahl presents us with this strange activity in immobility: it is what gives us a suspense, a suspended experience of our conditionality, and thus of our subjectivation.

Encountering *In Dependence*, or traversing the works in *Staging Independence*, we end up in a peculiar form of estrangement, a kind of latency where we are exposed to a powerful perception that our intimacy only exists on condition that we test the measure of the figures of similarity that inhabit the public, the crowd, the mass, the social body, the others.

In *Phaidon*, Socrates relates the Pythagorean formula: "we humans are in a *phroura*, we must neither release ourselves from it nor abandon it." The works here in question are literally figures of the *phroura*. The question is how to translate this Pythagorean term. These works are indeed "guard post" where we more than ever are in the position to watch out for and spy on the other, as the constitutive element of this crowd, and the one who determines the perception of similarity. The figure *phroura* at once signifies the observation post, the place of great numbers, the guard post, the watchtower, the sentinel, the nursery, the prison, the enclosure.

Martin Heidegger would have remarked that the enclosure (that which is *eingefriedet*), which is a figure of the *phroura*, is the space of dwelling, and as closure or withdrawal of the similar into proximity *(in das Frye)*, it is the only possibility to grasp the power of that which is free (*frei*). We may find a model for this thought in the Italian philosopher and myth scholar Furio Jesi, who in his work on the feast develops the concept of "spiability" (*spiabilità*). We are spies. What we're spying on, what we observe, is the gradation from proximity to similarity (the different), the modification and ceaseless (*actuality*) redefinition of our states our existence, between the figure of singularity and the figure of the "whatever" singularity, the singularity of the *quodlibet ens*, from the whatever being to the pleasurable being.

Anna Ådahl's works are apparatuses where we are presented — still as spectators — with spaces of guarding, with the silently ambiguous figure where observation passes from watching to guarding, where the observer passes from the heightened attention of the density of the number to the figures of danger of the crowd. If there is an aesthetic of the

crowd, as this work seems to presuppose, it resides in the fascination of the number, which leads us to the experience of a density, a *proton arythmiston*: density as inarticulate matter, as non-rhythmic, but also as sympathetic magic (the figures in the collage), and as an overflowing (*Staging Independence*).

In a chilling and strict fashion *Staging Independence* presents different archetypes for the creation of order in this non-rhythm, in this disorder of the crowds, in the incoherence of masses: the ritual fire of seasonal feasts (*Fire*[P37]) around which dances and processions are organized, the fence (*Crowd Control*[P34]) that pacifies the crowds, a strange metallic structure (*Human Pyramid*[P38]) that seems geared to well-defined choreographies, a loudspeaker (*Loudspeaker*[P40]) that seems ready to transmit orders.

But these objects, presented in their archetypal and museum-like dimensions, seem to be displayed as the remainders or the relics of a power of control. Displayed and presented in this way, they are handed over to their power, and it would be sufficient to move them into the street for them to once more become operative. But at the same time they show their radical powerlessness, as if they were poor models, passive witnesses, fragile traces, or simplified figures that in fact would neither serve to pacify the crowds nor to shout slogans at them.

The objects are brought back to a state of parody and paradox. They are powerless and at the same time terrifying, they have a power to operate and are at the same time derisory, efficient at the level of *doxa* and at the same time inoperative, emptied out and at the same time ideological, fascinating and at the same time exhausted. They are handed over to their incompleteness, and yet this lends them a power of display that preserves them in the moment of panic where a return to an operative state is possible.

But there is also something else — one more, small, pervasive and insidious thing. One can afford to be negligent about everything except these small things. Displayed as such, these parodic and derisory objects are henceforth nothing but a voiceless loudspeaker, three fences uselessly piled up on top of each other, a completely empty pyramid... They appear to be handed over, beyond this display that maintains them in a state of non-use, to a state of expectancy. For sure, this may be the expectancy to leave the exhibition space and return to a public space that would provide them with a new operative status. But this does not seem to be the case. This expectancy is even more silent and parodical, looking ahead to a final display of their reinforced and doubled emptiness, once we have taken it upon us.

Their expectancy is a kind of user's guide. They are waiting, aloof and calm, to be used as the inverted, latent, jubilatoy and intoxicating figure of the collective. *Staging Independence* is the secret and profound figure of an inverted feast.

"Plant a stake adorned with flowers in the middle of an open place, assemble the people, and you will have a feast," Jean-Jacques Rousseau said. But beyond this, here we find inscribed the formulas of a possible feast, on the condition that the fire is kept alive, that the loudspeaker diffuses the music for dancing that will make people laugh and shout ever more loudly, that the fences around the fire will be transformed into huge barbecues abundant with meat, pork roast, lamb, festoons of sausages, pieces of beef and game, and that the pyramid will still be used, no longer as a possible human pyramid, but as a gigantic structure onto which you can hang and pile sausages, ham, botargo, an abundance of fruits, pastries and brioche, pieces of bread, sweets, candied fruits, nougat and a profusion of bottles... The paradoxical formula for

expectancy has here become the always-possible figure of the feast. We are in a state of guarding, of vigil, as the figure of this expectancy.

It is here that we have the possibility to show our unconditionality, our state of *autarkeia*. We should remember that Aristotle, when discussing the concept of *autarkeia* in his *Eudemian Ethics*, wrote that there are two models for our acting: "shared contemplation" (*syntheorein*) and "feasting with" (*syneuocheomai*).

The work of Anna Ådahl always deals with this tension, experienced in the figure of intimacy, which has no existence other than in the figure of the similar, the friendly, and the "whatever" as a form of feast *ad libitum*. And yet these figures bear a trace, equally insistent, of a *post festum*.

What this work seems to affirm is that our power of unconditionality can only be compared with the complex conditions of what we call independence, i.e. that which releases us, and thus suspends us.

Public Matter

2010
(Work in progress)

Public Matter is a sculpture
project consisting of objects
recuperated from public spaces
(such as handles, gates, stair-
case steps) whose shapes have
been altered by the repeated
use of crowds. The objects are
exhibited as sculptures.
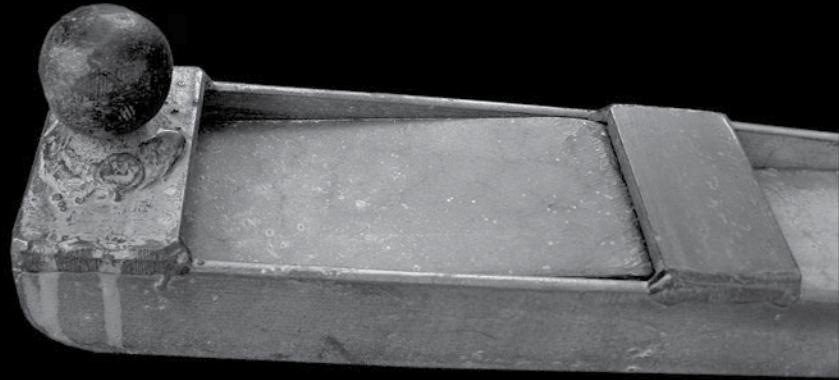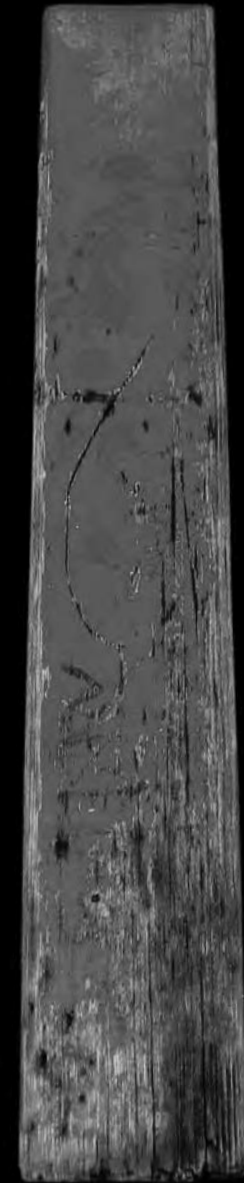
Door handle, metal
Staircase step, cement
Gate handle, metal
Handle from bench, metal
Detail of fence/barrier, metal
Detail of wooden bench

Fanny Stenberg

THE HUMAN SPACE

119

Each day we position ourselves. Consciously or subconsciously. Physically and mentally. We choose our placement in a room, our patterns of movement and our attitudes. We experience belonging or exclusion in relationship to a context. We look at, and are being looked upon; we act actively or passively. External power structures, strategic relations and social rules govern our behaviours, weighed against our inner mindset. We act emotionally or reasonably, according to our will and our desire, on intuition and by experience. We absorb information and impressions both from the inside and the outside, and we react upon them and adapt ourselves in relationship to our surroundings.

This perpetual movement into and out of different contexts, this constantly oscillating state driven by the contradictory nature of man, is a basic, well-known phenomenon, experienced by all of us in some form.

In my work as an architect I plan, and to some extent govern, the behaviours of human beings. In this context we can — somewhat simplistically — compare the architect's work with that of the gardener: the task is to know which type of earth, which conditions of light and what circumstances the different plants demand in order to be activated and grow. The behaviour of human beings is similar. An environment can enforce certain types of behaviour. Positive or negative ones. Of course, we cannot exactly predict what people will do or how they will react, but we can create specific conditions for certain desired effects. In a three-dimensional experience we use our whole bodies and all our senses to orient ourselves. These are choices that each of us make every day.

As a sensor, designed to register the abstract and immaterial as well as the palpable and concrete, our brain scans the terrain through more layers than just the purely visual and the physically tangible. It is tempting to simplify and delimit the comprehension of architecture only to embrace functional volumes and materials, but the components of architecture are more refined. The design and structure of a city for example, is a reflection of the powers and the value systems

which permeate the society. The form and appearance of the city is a direct imprint of the politics that are or have been applied. It is the consequence of the ruling economic interests, and the existing cultural development. Architecture responds to all of these measurable and immeasurable parameters, and the part played by the architect changes in accordance with the evolution of society. Our needs and our ways of decoding and orienting ourselves in our surroundings, therefore also change over time. The architect's task of staging and fulfilling functions and needs is in other words a risky business. A solution that works out perfectly in one context can in another century or in other cultural surrounding turn out to be a complete failure. Many conditions weigh in. There are, however, some common human experiences that are fundamental for our perception, orientation and comprehension of our surroundings. The common experiences through which we relate to architecture are attained when we are very young.

In his book *Om att opleve arkitektur* ⟨On the Experience of Architecture⟩ from 1957, Steen Eiler Rasmussen reflects:

No art form works with a more cool, abstract form; but at the same time none other has a more intimate liaison with the everyday life of man, from the cradle to the grave. ⟨…⟩ It ⟨architecture⟩ is based on a large number of general, human perceptions, on impressions and experiences that we have all had, from a very early stage in our lives. In particular, it is a question of how we relate to dead things.[1]

Further on in his text, Rasmussen illustrates this through a comparison with animals. Abilities that many animals are born with, a human child will acquire only through patient work. A human being spends years of her life learning to stand, to walk, to run, to swim. In return, the human being quickly expands her domains to include "dead things" outside of her living body. With the help of different tools she expands the scale of her operations and their radius in a way that no animal can.

In her helplessness the human child begins by tasting, touching and pulling things, crawling onto or over them, in order to experience what characterizes them, whether they are sympathetic or hostile. Quickly, the child learns to use tools and thereby to avoid some of the most unpleasant experiences. Soon, the child has developed a routine in using things and tools. It is as if the child's nerves, her whole sensitivity reaches far beyond the lifeless tools. If one stands in front of a wall that is so high that one cannot reach its top, one can still have an experience of its physical nature and characteristics by, for example, bouncing a ball against it. One will then experience that it is different than bouncing a ball against canvas or paper. With the help of the ball one feels the hardness of the wall and its solid, impenetrable character.

In this way we create a common human archive of experiences about materials and spaces, and about how they affect us in different situations. The experiences are put together with instincts and practical matters. To have an overview, to be able to escape from danger and to have

one's back clear, are all natural instincts that to a large extent decide whether or not we feel safe in a place or a situation. For example, this is why few people would feel at ease placing the working desk in a position with their back to the door, because it prevents an overview of who is entering the room and when. The way we position ourselves in a room affects us emotionally.

Spaces as such do not only affect us emotionally, but also create the frameworks for our existence. For example, if we are experiencing difficulty finding our way through an environment, this creates uncertainty and makes us slow. Sometimes this is useful. Sometimes it is devastating. It depends on what we want to achieve. With a single moment of hesitation, a driver who breaks on a motorway can cause a traffic jam through the domino effect that occurs. Reversed, in a concept from 2002 by Karin Sander, "Porscheplatz Stuttgart", the graphic pattern on the roadway makes the speed seem higher than it actually is, so that the driver naturally slows down. Here, the deceleration is a desired effect since the cars should enter into a roundabout, and the slower speed makes the traffic flow more evenly.

Similar to the traffic situation, pass ability and overview, clarity and movement without narrow passages that create dangerous blockages, are the most important components in order to uphold calmness in large crowds — for example those that circulate through a subway system every day, or the great numbers of fans and spectators at a soccer game.

Great crowds, masses of human

beings, are fascinating. Powerful and impressive. Some of us think it is terrifying to be involved in a crowd. Numerous individuals turn into one common body, over which none of those absorbed is the master. A body without a head. The multiplication of individual energies in a crowd of human beings has a vertiginous effect. The power is overwhelming. Once you are pulled into the energy field of the crowd, you have no choice — you are being swallowed whole. But entering a crowd may also be an experience of total co-existence and community. A positive experience of community, shared by thousands of minds, is something strong and affects us intensely. Liberated from their egos, people may experience an almost religious type of ecstasy.

A crowd that panics, on the other hand, is a disaster — and the scenario almost always ends in a tragedy. To govern the crowd spatially, to know how flow schemes function and to predict normal behaviour, as well as to know what kinds of spatial designs may cause problems — is necessary in order to create well-functioning places for crowds, such as arenas or festivals. This is normally called Crowd Management Strategy.

Experts in crowd management calculate the movements of the crowd using advanced simulations created with mathematic formulas. Through these computerized simulations one can get a schematic notion of the movements of a mass of human beings — for example, the audience formations in the design of a sports arena. A correct management of the mass is based on keeping people in motion in a steady, comfortable pace,

about 1–1.3 meters per second. It is a known phenomenon that the performance of a crowd is reduced when the choice of orientation is increased. This is a law called the Braess Paradox (after the mathematician Dietrich Braess). It means that if people are given many paths to choose between when they are trying to find their way, they will get there more slowly. The reason for this is that it takes more time to choose and make decisions, but also that it encourages selfish behaviour. Everyone wants to do what suits him or her best. The open, geometric forms and the symmetry that we find in many old arenas, like ancient theatres, show a great understanding of both the art of engineering and the need for simple navigation to manage and keep together a huge crowd of spectators.

The primarily aim in crowd management is to keep people calm and to control the anxiety that can break out. In addition to the mathematical formulas used to establish the correct spatial precautions, there is also the psychological aspect of how to manage a crowd. This part of human behaviour depends on information and emotions that make people feel safe. Clear messages, legible signs, correct lighting and pleasant sound levels are important parameters to manage the crowd. Well-organized scenarios, where there is no doubt regarding what is happening and what the crowd can expect, are crucial in avoiding confusion and irritation. Many situations of panic in crowds start with false rumours — for example, about a concert that is supposed to have already started, on account of which people start

pushing from one end when the other end is blocked. A crowd consists of a multiplicity of individuals, but does not function as an individual, and can therefore not be governed as one. The crowd must be understood as a unity, a super-organism with its own kind of psychology, which is incapable of freedom under responsibility. In a crowd, order can be replaced by chaos in no time. Research into the dynamics of the mass, however, has changed radically during the last couple of years. Many specialists and researchers today agree that mob mentality and mass panic are not natural parts of a crowd's behaviour. Keith Stills, expert in crowd management and operating through the company Crowd Dynamics, shares this idea. In a recent interview he states that the crowd does not run amok by itself, but that this is primarily a question of design and information.

Crowd management is not a new subject of analysis or debate — but there are constantly new insights into how it should be treated. In 2000, nine fans were squeezed to death at a Pearl Jam concert at the Roskilde Festival outside of Copenhagen — a festival with a good reputation, arranged yearly since 1971. After the shocking accident, a new way of organizing the crowd was developed, which has turned out to be very successful. The new spatial structure entails logistics with more air corridors and separation of the crowd into sections so that pressure cannot mount as high as before.

An interesting aspect of how the Roskilde Festival was able both to regain its credibility as a concert organizer, and to regain control of the crowd, was

precisely that it was not satisfied with only a new spatial organization. What was needed was a correspondence between a new physical structure and a very active campaign to raise awareness in the audience about how to act in order to avoid danger. The crowd possesses a consciousness, even though it has no head.

Depending on where we are, not only spatially but also within which social context, we act differently and enter into different formations. In her research, Martina Löw, at the Institute of Sociology at the University of Technology in Darmstadt, focuses directly on this point. She not only investigates how human beings form structures in a spatial context, but also how human social structures affect, form and transform a space, and change our perception of it.

In a recent article on 'The Social Construction of Space and Gender', Martina Löw writes:

Spaces are conceived today as processual, relationally ordered systems. Accordingly, investigating the topological dimensions of one or more cultures no longer means, as our everyday notions might suggest, observing the way structures are ordered in space but looking into how these structures form spaces. ⟨…⟩ If it is true that spaces are based on the fact that objects placed (in the sense as well of something that has grown, that flows, etc.) are set in relation to one another, then the constitution of space cannot be conceived without bodies. ⟨…⟩ What we perceive through our bodies are not only things

but also 'interspaces between things'. What this means is that in perceiving through our bodies, we form syntheses in our everyday activities as a means of linking together a great multiplicity of objects to form spaces. In doing so, the body leads a noteworthy double existence. It is not only the medium of perception but is itself a placed object. As such it is staged, styled, genderized, permeated by ethnic construction, thus becoming a highly precarious 'building-block' of spaces.[2]

We are ourselves a part of the spatial condition, and influence it with our existence.

The French, Marxist philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre paved the way for theorists such as Löw. In 1974, Lefebvre published his legendary work, *The Production of Space*, in which he examines and displays how the "mental space" and the "real space" (the physical and social sphere in which we live) are connected.

Lefebvre writes:

(Social) space is a (social) product. This proposition might appear to border on the tautologous, and hence on the obvious. There is good reason, however, to examine it carefully, to consider implications and consequences before accepting it. Many people will find it hard to endorse the notion that space has taken on within the present mode of production, within society as it actually is, a sort of reality of its own, a reality clearly distinct from, yet much like, those assumed in

the same global process by commodities, money and capital. Many people, finding this claim paradoxical, will want proof. The more so in view of the further claim that the space thus produced also serves as a tool of thought and of action; that in addition to being a means of production it is also a means of control, and hence of domination, of power; yet that, as such, it escapes in part from those who would make use of it. The social and political (state) forces which engendered this space now seek, but fail, to master it completely; yet the very agency that has forced spatial reality towards a sort of uncontrollable autonomy now strives to run it into the ground, then shackle and enslave it. ⟨…⟩ Social space will be revealed in its particularity to the extent that it ceases to be indistinguishable from mental space (as defined by philosophers and mathematicians) on the one hand, and physical space (as defined by practico-sensory activity and the perception of 'nature') on the other.[3]

The social space is more than just a link or an overlap between the mental space and the physical space. It is both the condition and the meaning. Power structures, which reflect our social behaviour, therefore become fundamental in all types of concepts and comprehensions of space. We position ourselves in a room, decode situations and understand our surroundings, always in relationship to something or someone. The social space is inseparable from the mental space as well as from the physical space.

1. Steen Eiler Rasmussen, *Om at opleve arkitektur* (1957), 14.
2. Martina Löw, 'The Social Construction of Space and Gender', *European Journal of Woman's studies* (2006), Vol.13 (2), 120.
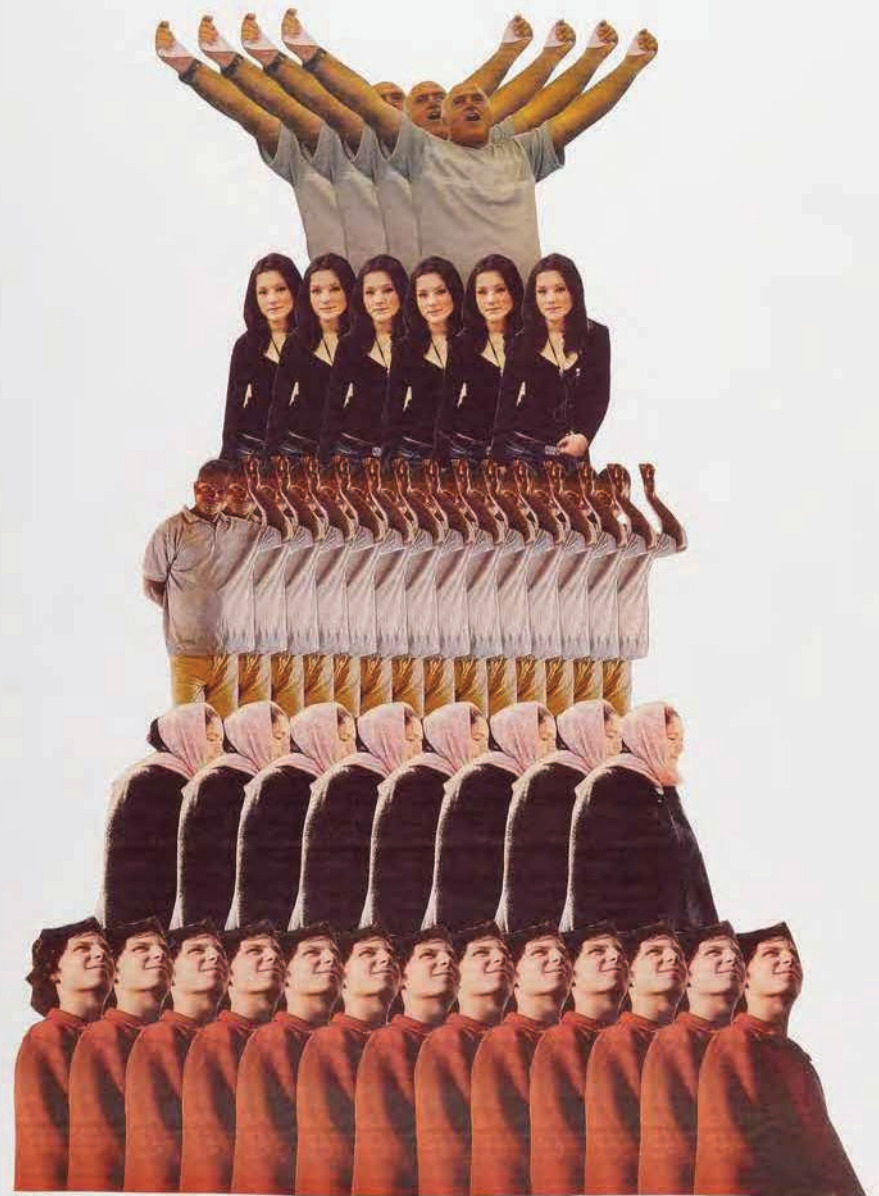3. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (1974), 26 XII.

Collages

2009
Paper, prints, photocopies
50 × 70 cm
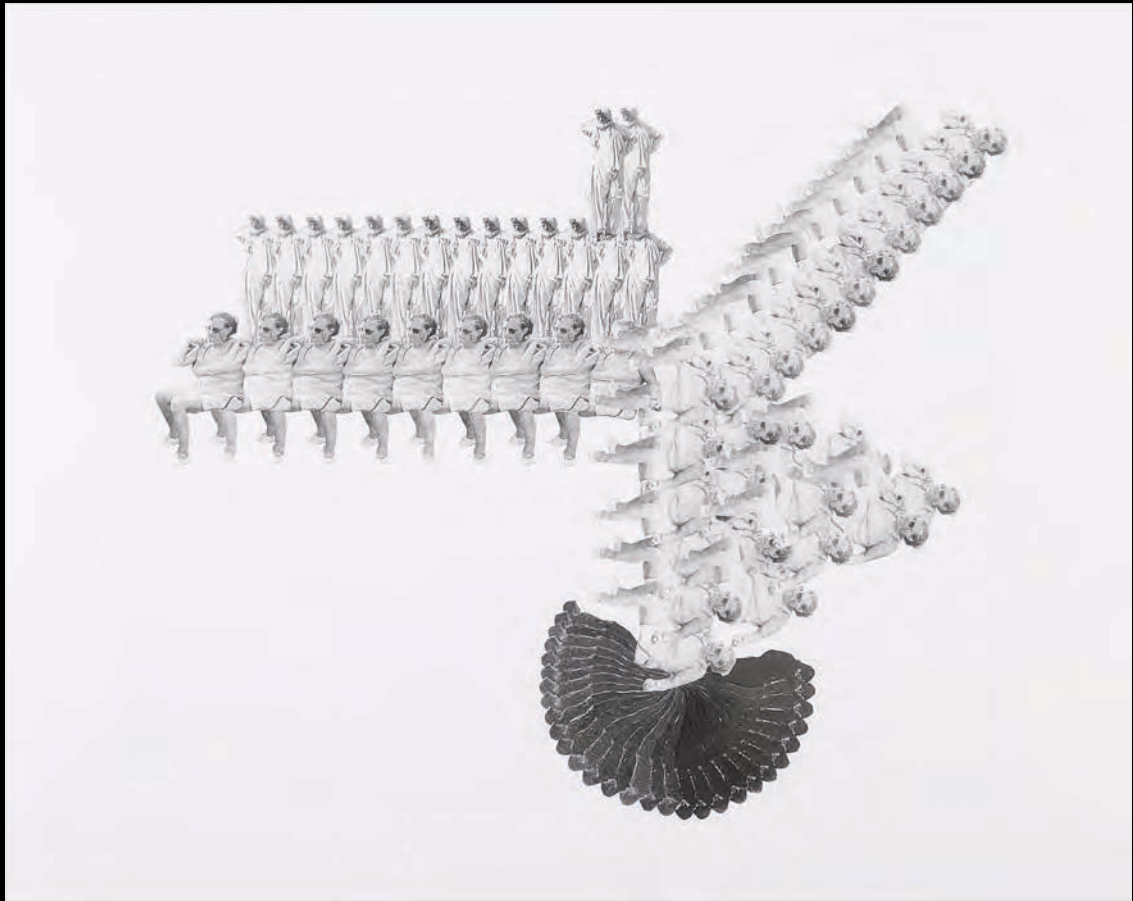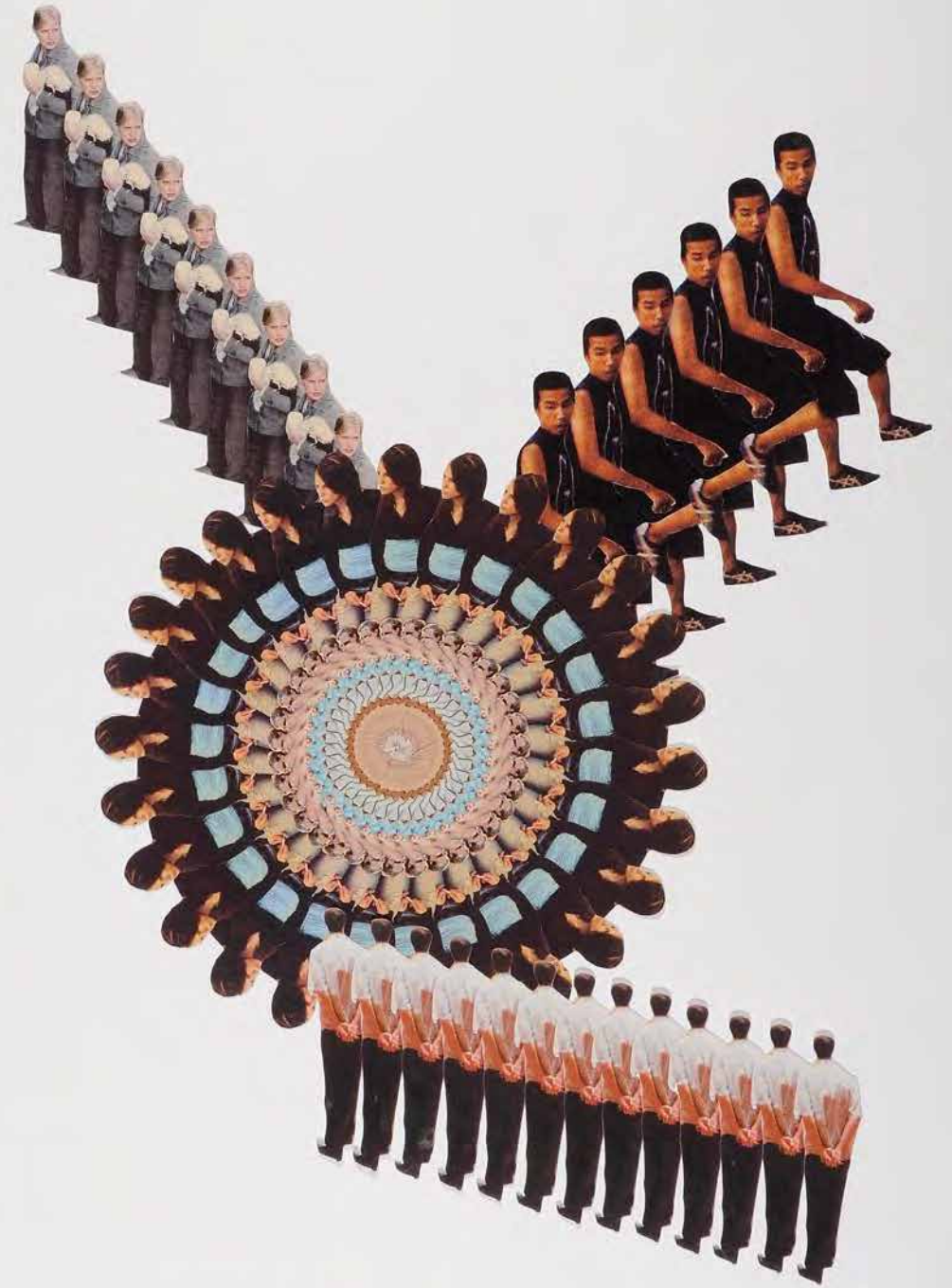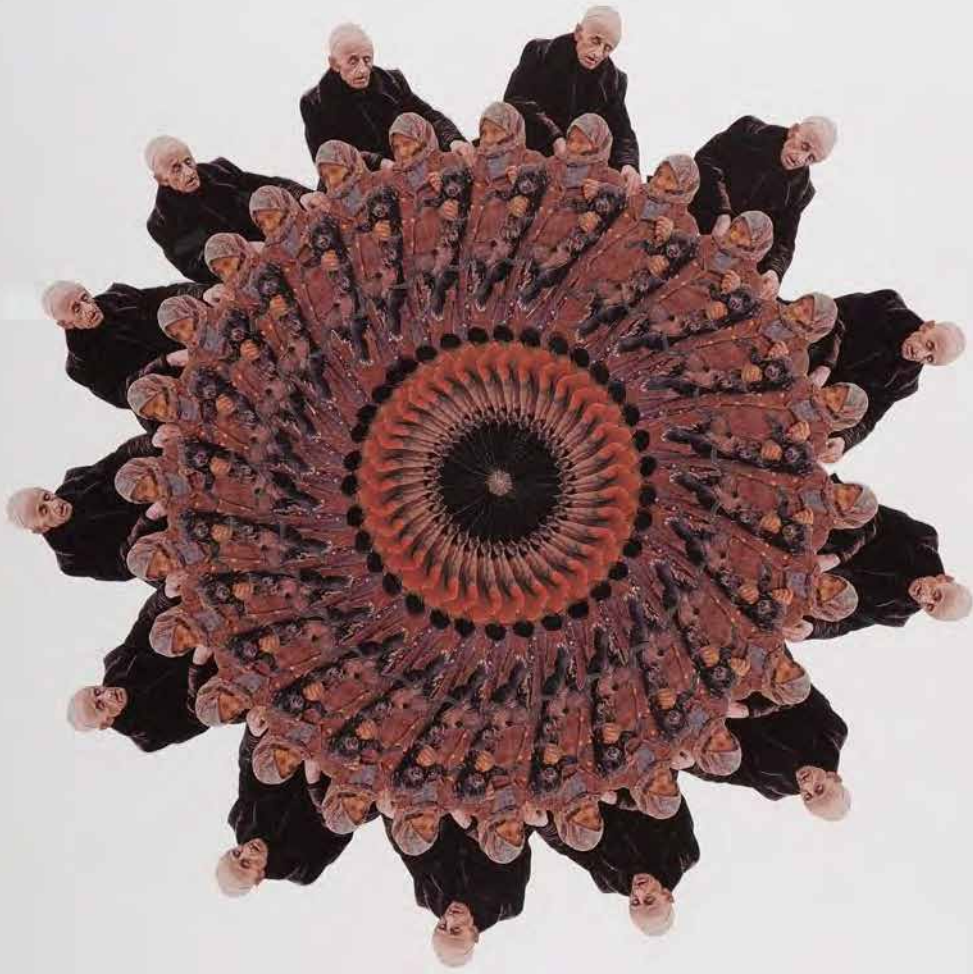70 × 100 cm
100 × 70 cm
40 × 50 cm
40 × 50 cm
70 × 100 cm
70 × 100 cm
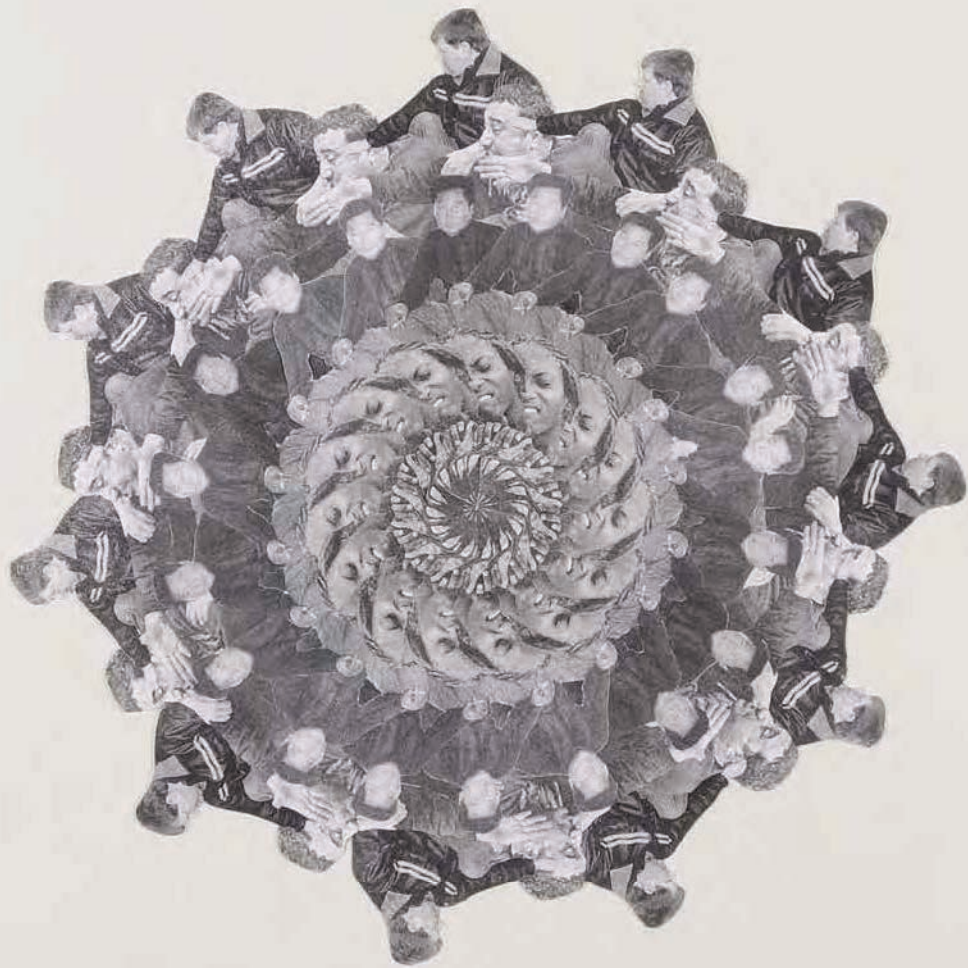
Kim West

COLLAGE AND CROWD

Notes on the Histories and Politics of Collage and Montage

141

Ulrich had just walked over to the window when the march-
ers arrived. They were flanked by police, who dispersed the
onlookers lining the avenue like a cloud of dust raised by
the firm tread of the marchers. A little farther back, vehicles
could be seen wedged in the crowd, while its relentless
current flowed around them in endless black waves on
which the foam of upturned faces seemed to be dancing.
When the spearhead of the mob came within sight of Count
Leinsdorf's windows, it looked as though it had been slowed
down by some command; an immense ripple ran backward
along the column as the advancing ranks jammed up, like a
muscle tightening before launching a blow.
— Musil, *The Man Without Qualities*, 1930

One of John Heartfield's many famous photomontages shows a
clenched fist, raised in a gesture of triumph or resistance. Within
the figure of the hand and the lower arm, which is placed in a
diagonal against a neutral, dark background, one sees another
image, displaying a multitude of people with their clenched
fists in a corresponding gesture. The image was published on
the cover of *Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung*'s special issue on the
resistance against fascism in 1934, with a clear caption: "Alle
Fäuste zu einer geballt", "all fists clenched into one". Heart-
field's simple yet effective composition, Benjamin Buchloh points
out in a text on Soviet Constructivism and Productivism, seems to
be directly inspired by a photomontage by Gustav Klutsis from
1930, which shows a similar motif, constructed according to the
same rhetorical figure: a multiplicity of open, outstretched hands
form a common, outstretched hand, placed in a diagonal against
a neutral, monochromic background.[1] In this case, the caption
said: "Let us fulfill the great project of the plan"; the poster was
supposed to encourage the viewer to participate in the new five-
year plan. The two images are based on the same metaphor: the
crowd as a hand, a clenched fist, a muscle. But the images are
not metaphoric; the qualities of photomontage instead make
it possible for them to show the different elements at the same
time, in a simple relationship of tension: the crowd *and* the fist,
the multiplicity *and* the unity.
      There exists, it seems, a clear, almost obvious relation-
ship between photomontage — or, to use a more general term,

1. See Benjamin Buchloh,
'From Faktura to Facto-
graphy', *October*, vol 30,
1984, 111.

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collage — and the crowd during this period, the years around 1930. Art had concrete political tasks and the stakes were high: Fascism and Nazism were gathering their forces; counter-images against their ideology and propaganda, their notions of the people and the nation, were of immediate necessity. During the same period, a new type of mass culture was established, and the crowd became a palpable phenomenon in urban life and in collective consciousness. In a famous article from 1927, Siegfried Kracauer writes about the "mass ornaments" of the new theatre and dance spectacles, which directly mirror the instrumentalization of humanity by the capitalist conditions of production; against this notion of the mass, there was a need for images which could show a people whose nature was not separated from itself, images that did not reproduce an alienating ideology.[2] In the techniques and operations that were pioneered in the Cubist and the Futurist experiments with *papiers collés*, Constructivists and Surrealists, Communist and Anti-Fascist artists found the means to produce rhetorically powerful images characterized by an indissoluble tension between the different, assembled elements, on account of which they could represent the crowd without reducing its complexity and multiplicity. Collage was political: because of its material and formal qualities, it seemed to have a specific ability to engender images of a new, revolutionary or critical political subject. But this was during the years around 1930. The question seems apparent: And today? Which are collage's contemporary political possibilities? Which relations between collage and crowd could one talk about in our age — given that these concepts and phenomena are still at all relevant?

The question is essential, but perhaps not as apparent as it seems; perhaps its simplicity is treacherous. Formulated in an incautious manner, it can imply a certain idea about history, according to which forms, techniques or materials can only have a true effect — political, artistic or otherwise — in "their own" time, "their own" historical moment. Collage's — contemporary? — political or critical possibilities would rather seem to be connected to its ability to question, complicate, even transgress such a notion. Its relationship to history is complex, not simple. Collage, we could say, seems to be characterized by a perpetually renewed *actuality*, at the same time as it is constantly

2. Siegfried Kracauer, 'The Mass Ornament', in *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, transl. Thomas Y Levin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995).

traversed by *heterogeneous temporalities*. In fact — or at least in principle — each significant artistic movement since the first appearance of collage in Picasso's and Braque's studios in 1912 has laid claim to collage's forms and operations as its own; and it always seems to be possible to construct an art historical narrative that points out collage as specifically representative of a certain period or tendency. Collage is emblematic of the early avant-garde experiments, of synthetic Cubism's, Futurism's and Dada's break with the stylistic codes and conventions of classical painting; it is the paradigmatic image of the Surrealists' unexpected combinations of heterogeneous elements, and its techniques are at the basis of the Constructivist photomontage; after the war it becomes the figure above all for the different movements that search for new relationships to an emerging, late capitalist consumer culture, in New Realism, Pop Art and Situationism; with 1968 it returns again, in the form of political photomontage, but now fused with the problematics of conceptual art and institutional critique; in the 80s it becomes emblematic, rather, of Postmodernism's border-transgressing eclecticism and fragmentation; in the 90s it is evoked as a model for the sampling culture of the emerging digital networks; and in today's visual arts and cinema it remains an essential resource for the different attempts to establish new forms of archives and alternative historiographies. Collage seems in itself to be incompatible with art historical narratives that are based on the idea of the "death" and the following "rebirth" of certain forms of expression or media — painting, film, etc.

What is the reason for this constantly renewed actuality? One can imagine a double answer. The fundamental operation of collage is the aggregation of existing, heterogeneous cultural elements. A piece of wallpaper or a newspaper cutting is pasted into a Cubist painting; elements of photo reproductions are combined into a new composition; a bicycle wheel is mounted on a stool; a martial arts film is given a soundtrack with Maoist propaganda; photographs, cuttings and sketches are assembled into a gigantic, mnemotechnic atlas — and so on.[3] In each one of these cases, a certain number of cultural artefacts of varying dimensions — from fragments to full works — are joined together into a new whole. This operation has two consequences. First, it implies an awareness regarding the material

3. According to established nomenclature one distinguishes between the concepts of "collage" (which would refer to a two-dimensional combination of heterogeneous artifacts), "assemblage" (which would be the three-dimensional correlate), and "assisted readymade" (which would be an object whose nature as art comes from its being placed in a certain institutional context, but which has furthermore been manipulated in some manner). These distinctions probably originate from William Seitz, curator of the influential exhibition 'The Art of Assemblage' at MoMA in 1961. Cf Seitz, *The Art of Assemblage* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1961), 10, 46, and passim. I here instead — which should be apparent from the above list — follow Olivier Quintyn, who sees collage as the general, common dispositif for these different forms. However, I do find the distinction between "collage" and "montage" essential (even though I obviously do not equal "montage" with cinematographic montage, since this would render all discussions about photomontage, literary montage, etc. meaningless). They are both based on the combination of heterogeneous elements, but montage's materials are not necessarily artifactual, which is the case concerning collage. A preliminary, minimal definition of their relationship would therefore state that *collage is a montage of artifacts*. Unfortunately, the concepts of "montage" and "collage" are used as synonyms by many of their most important theorists (such as Adorno and Benjamin).

characteristics of the artwork. To combine elements from different origins, produced in different materials and media, is to be forced to reflect upon the inherent qualities and limitations of these separate elements, as well as the differences, the transitions and the confrontations between them in their new totality. One could say that this is what Clement Greenberg focuses on in his famous article, 'The Pasted-Paper Revolution' from 1958, which inscribes collage into the narrative about modernist art's search for the purity of the medium: Picasso's experiments with newspaper cuttings and reproduced images aimed to explore the relationships between figure and ground, and to accentuate the painting's surfaceness, and they were therefore but a link in Cubism's examination of the essential qualities of painting.[4] In this way, Greenberg obviously blinds himself to the second essential consequence of collage's fundamental operation: its openness towards the outside, towards the changing landscape of technologies and media within which art operates. Collage incorporates the forms, materials and artefacts of mass media and capitalist culture — Schwitters' ticket stubs, Rauschenberg's postcards and gadgets, Sanja Ivekovi′s fashion images — into the interior of the artwork. It is open toward the changes in technologies and media that characterize the conditions of production of a certain society, and stands in a direct relationship to that society's ideologies and social processes, which it therefore has a privileged ability to play with and criticize.

The reason for collage's constantly renewed actuality, then, would be that it entails an awareness and a reflection about the artwork's material qualities, at the same time as it always stands open toward, registers and employs its surrounding society's technological and ideological transformations. However, another characteristic trait of collage is that it is traversed by heterogeneous temporalities: an image that combines elements with different origins will unavoidably assemble a multiplicity of historical legacies. What characterizes a work such as Jacques Villeglé's *Les Bulles du Temple* (1969) — one of his many *décollages*: torn posters gathered from the walls and boards of the streets of Paris in which the different layers of images glued onto one another are rendered visible as the sedimentations of a geological cross section — is precisely that it holds together in its interior a number of operative temporalities. The work's most

4. Clement Greenberg, 'The Pasted-Paper Revolution', in *The Collected Essays and Criticism, vol 4* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

apparent element is a torn film poster with images of Barbra Streisand, which has been subjected to a Situationist *détournement*: next to her face speech bubbles have been placed, within which a simple phrase is declined according to the verb forms of French grammar: "Je suis un produit de consommation", "Tu es un produit de consommation", "Elle est…", "Nous sommes…", etc. Through tears in the film poster, one can see fragments of other posters: ads, political slogans, homemade notes; colours, deconstructed words, hardly identifiable image elements, which together form a complex composition. A sprawling network of genealogies, then, is gathered in this work: the different overlaying posters' separate histories; the different iconographies at work in the images of the playbills and placards; the political and social events which are mirrored in slogans and messages; the Situationist intervention's play with references and its own art historical tradition, and so on. *Les Bulles du Temple* is a complex image, which gives an impression of a moment — February 1969, when the experiences of May '68 were still vivid, while their hopes for the future were beginning to seem dated — which is in itself an aggregation of heterogeneous histories and temporalities. The same thing could be said about collage in general: it is always an assemblage of more or less compatible histories. And this would of course be valid *a fortiori* if one were to think of some of the last century's great atlas projects: Hanna Höch's image album, Aby Warburg's *Mnemosyne*, Hanne Darboven's *Kulturgeschichte 1880–1983*, Gerhard Richter's *Atlas* — which are all based on the historiographic effects, the play of resemblances and differences, the analogies and continuities which become visible when great numbers of images are combined in groups and series.

How could one describe this aggregation of temporalities in collage more precisely? Which are its specific traits, its abilities and qualities? Even the most simple collage performs a complex semiotic operation. This operation is clearly described in an oft-cited passage from a text written by the experimental research collective Groupe μ in 1978:

Each cited element breaks the continuity or the linearity of the discourse and leads necessarily to a double reading: that of the fragment perceived in relation to its text of

5. Quoted in Marjorie Perloff, 'The Invention of Collage', in *The Futurist Moment* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2003), 47. The same passage is quoted in Gregory Ulmer's 'The Object of Post-Criticism', in *The Anti-Aesthetic*, ed. Hal Foster (Seattle: Bay Press, 1983), 88.

origin; that of the same fragment as incorporated into a new whole, a different totality. The trick of collage consists also of never entirely suppressing the alterity of these elements reunited in a temporary composition.[5]

Collage combines separate elements into a new whole; the elements are given a new significance through being parts of the new whole, but the significance of this whole, in turn, presupposes that the joined elements retain something of their old significance, their original connotations and histories. "The trick of collage", Groupe μ writes, consists in "never entirely suppressing the alterity". In a hypothetical, minimal collage, which would only consist of two combined elements (one may, for example, think of Iveković's *Double Life* series from 1975), there are, then, always at least three histories active simultaneously: those of the two separate elements, and that of the whole, which is generated through the irreducible tension between the elements. But most collages contain far more than two elements, of different scales and degrees of legibility, and the description of their semiotic operations can consequently be made far more complex: one can talk of "minor" and "exaggerated" elements (where the former would be too small or fragmented to read or identify as such, and the latter would on the contrary constitute autonomous entities);[6] one can establish a grammar for the ways of combining these elements in the syntax of collage (in paratactic series or groups; in dialectical oppositions and syntheses; in collisions between incommensurable reference systems); one can discuss different methods for separating elements from their original contexts and inserting them into new ones (cut, quote, sample, etc). Through its great — even limitless — number of variables, collage can break free and analyze, reconfigure and combine histories in a kaleidoscopic multiplicity. The essential aspect, however, remains collage's non-reductiveness: its ability to aggregate separate elements and histories in a new totality, within which the integrity of the elements is not lost, but rather maintained in an open relationship of tension. "The use of the sample", the poet and theorist Olivier Quintyn writes in one of the most advanced texts on collage's dispositif, "oscillates between conserving the ontological gap between the constituents, and recombining them in a homogenizing manner through

6. Cf Guy Debord and Gil J Wolman, 'Mode d'emploi du Détournement', *Les Lèvres nues* nr 8, 1956.

the effect of the disposition".[7]

Collage is characterized by a constantly renewed actuality and is traversed by heterogeneous temporalities. It is based on an awareness regarding its material qualities and an openness toward its technological and ideological context, on account of which it always, in a self-reflexive manner, "updates" itself in relationship to the changing social and mediatic system that it can at the same time criticize. In this sense one could, on a very abstract level, describe collage as a sort of intelligent interface or program, which rewrites itself in relationship to new data, hardware and feedback, and consequently changes its information output. And in collage, this process of rewriting and transformation takes the form of a play with histories that is potentially limitless in its complexity, combining and confronting historical elements with each other in open tensions, exposing new differences and similarities, breaks and continuities. Collage's relationship to history is complex, both its place within history and its ways of treating historiographic narratives. Perhaps it is starting from such an analysis — however swift and superficial — that it can become sensible to approach the question of the political significance of collage today, of the relationship between collage and crowd in our historical moment. To understand the politics of collage must in some sense be to reflect upon the ways it relates to, renegotiates, and complicates the present's relationship to the past and to the coming. One could point out three general ways to think the politics of collage, which do not exclude, but rather layer with and complicate one another: as a model for how the artwork may stage an ideal of *equality*; as a form with a certain *redemptive* force; and as a collection of techniques and operations with a specific *critical* capacity.

Can one speak of the appearance of collage as a political event? When Picasso and Braque made their first *papiers collés*, this could in a certain sense be seen as the culmination of an art historical process that had been under way since the second half of the 18th century: the process with which the stylistic rules of "classical" art — codified, in the most apparent manner, in the doctrine of the hierarchy of the genres, and the corresponding system of conventions — were gradually dismantled, and the limits between "noble" and "humble" materials, techniques, and motifs were dissolved. Together with the readymade, collage

7. Olivier Quintyn, 'Du dispositif collagiste: hétérogénéités, opérations, intégrations', in *Dispositifs/Dislocations* (Paris: Al Dante, 2007), 44.

constituted a drastic radicalization of this critical process: here, it is no longer only the demands for the dignified rank of the motif and the nobility of the style that are questioned and transgressed (as — to simplify to the point of caricature — in Realism and Impressionism), but reality itself which intrudes into the interior of the artwork (collage), or is endowed with artistic value by being placed within a certain institutional context (readymade). As Jacques Rancière has argued in a number of texts, this process is not only a development in the history of styles, but a fundamental displacement which transforms the very conditions for how to think the nature of art and the relationship between aesthetics and politics. That the stylistic rules of classical art are dismantled implies, in a simple sense, a democratization of art: the conventions that direct the choices of styles and motifs are no longer necessarily inscribed into a strict social hierarchy. However, this process also points toward a more radical equality: art as such is not defined as a system of practices that follow certain rules, but is instead seen as a mode of being that generates a certain impression, a certain — aesthetic — type of experience. Thereby, art can be separated both from its connection to a specific author, whose technical abilities are expressed in the work, and from its specific addressee, the recipient who would be particularly suited and qualified to experience this work. In what Rancière calls the "aesthetic regime", there is no longer anything that defines a priori which techniques and materials are artistic, and who is legitimized to create or experience artworks.[8]

Collage is paradigmatic for this new regime. It is based on the incorporation of foreign, non-artistic elements into its interior, and through its fundamental operation it transgresses each notion about the artist's command over her work: a collage always combines a multitude of authors and voices, and always includes forms and techniques that escape the creator's control. Does this entail that collage is inscribed into a certain history about the heroic adventures of early modernism, that it is trapped in a certain — obsolete — ideal about subversive breaks with the codes of established art? For Rancière's argument, it is essential that the aesthetic regime should not be understood as a new phase or epoch in a linear art history, that the process with which it is installed is not irreversible or global, implemented once and for all, and then generally valid. On the contrary,

8. Cf Jacques Rancière, 'Des régimes de l'art et du faible intérêt de la notion de modernité', in *Le Partage du sensible* (Paris: Fabrique éditions, 2000; in English as *The Politics of Aesthetics*, transl. Rockhill, New York: Continuum, 2004), and 'L'esthétique comme politique', in *Malaise dans l'esthétique* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 2004; in English as *Aesthetics and its Discontents*, transl. Corcoran, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009).

there is always a multiplicity of regimes active simultaneously: the aesthetic one coexists and competes with the "representational" one, within which art remains locked in a system of positions, limits and abilities. The aesthetic regime, then, must in a sense be recreated or re-conquered in each artwork: forms, techniques, materials and expressions must be torn away from the positions to which they are ascribed, the abilities and ranks with which they are associated; styles, media and technologies must be inscribed into other genealogies, allotted new origins starting from which they can point towards other uses, other ways of relating to the present and the coming. That collage is paradigmatic for the aesthetic regime therefore does not mean that it is enclosed in a certain historical narrative, but rather that it, in a particularly evident way, enforces the ability of art within this regime to disturb such positions and narratives, to open them up toward heterogeneous temporalities and subjectivations. This, then, would be a first way to understand the politics of collage today: it can render an ideal of equality operative; it can tear away images, materials, forms and techniques from the roles they are ascribed in certain hierarchies and systems; and it can liberate styles, media, and technologies from their compelling connections to a certain present, a certain historical moment. This is what John Heartfield does when he rearranges Nazi news imagery into a new representation of a crowd united in resistance; it is what Richard Hamilton does when he assembles the icons of the new consumer culture into an image of tomorrow's life forms (the incomparably famous *Just What Is It That Makes Today's Homes So Different, So Appealing?*, 1956); but it is also what Jean-Luc Godard does when he cuts together sequences and images from the archives of the histories of cinema and art, in order to tell the true history of cinema, as well as the histories that cinema itself was never allowed to tell (*Histoire(s) du cinéma*, 1988–97).

The final example also points towards another, adjoining way to think the politics of collage, which renders its historico-philosophical figure more precise and complex. One finds a first model for this in one of the 20th century's greatest montage or collage works: Walter Benjamin's *Arcades Project*, his never finished exploration of the Paris passages, the built-in pedestrian streets which led through certain neighbourhoods in this city,

and where a new type of capitalist culture began to take shape during the first half of the 19th century. "Method of this project: literary montage", Benjamin writes in an often commented passage in this text. "I needn't *say* anything. Merely show. I shall purloin no valuables, appropriate no ingenious formulations. But the rags, the refuse — these I will not inventory but allow, in the only way possible, to come into their own: by making use of them".[9] Benjamin's application of collage techniques was here based upon a specific historiographic model. He wanted to study the architectural, urban and social phenomenon of the passages as the place where a number of history's lines of force intersect, in order to understand, starting from this place, the origin of his own culture in its true complexity. However, the aim of the *Arcades Project* was not to anchor, to fortify a given present — Benjamin's own time, the Central Europe of the 20s and 30s — by describing its deepest origin and subsequent development. Instead, Benjamin wanted to perform a "Copernican turn" in the writing of history, and reveal the multiplicity of origins starting from which it would be possible to shatter the continuum of tradition and open new ways to see and to transform the present. And it was for this work he found the form in the "literary montage", which can assemble the "insignificant" traces and details of history — "the rags, the refuse": marginal documents, texts on ephemeral phenomena and forgotten attractions, sketches for unrealized inventions — into a new type of historiographic narrative, which neither reduces the integrity of the elements, nor re-establishes those stories which lead up to the present in its given — catastrophic — state. The abilities of collage to aggregate heterogeneous elements into a new whole that at the same time upholds their original qualities and connotations, as well as to renegotiate temporalities and histories, for Benjamin gave it a double redemptive power: to "save" the objects of history from the mythological or archaic narratives to which they had been subjected, instead allowing them to "come into their own" and *as historical* enter into a relationship of tension, a constellation with the present — what Benjamin calls a "dialectical image"; and thereby to disclose history's abundance of origins and unrealized possibilities, which can lead to a political "awakening" for the alienated masses.

Godard's *Histoire(s) du cinéma* is based on a partly corre-

9. Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, transl. H Eiland & K McLaughlin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), N1, a8.

sponding method. Just as the *Arcades Project*, Godard's great collage of film sequences, images, literary quotes, pieces of music and voices aims to understand a certain age in its true complexity, starting from the study of a specific place where history's lines of force intersect. In this case the subject is not the 19th century of industrialization and urbanization, but the century of cinema, which is studied starting from and with the help of cinema itself, which for Godard should be understood as a heterogeneous aggregate of techniques, forms and ideas. Just as Benjamin, Godard uses collage to assemble the traces and details of history into a historiographic narrative that allows these elements to retain their qualities and connotations, at the same time as their combination does not conform to the story that leads up to the present in its existing state. In this case, "the rags and the refuse" consist of scenes and cuts from the archive of the history of cinema, which are juxtaposed to and layered with art historical images, quotes written on the screen and recorded and sampled voices and sounds in the soundtrack, altogether forming an almost infinitely dense and polyvalent composition. And just as the *Arcades Project*, Godard's work thereby aims to "save" the objects of history from the great myths into which they are inscribed, in order, instead, to restore their true nature, allow them to "come into their own". In this case, the "myths" in question are primarily the great myths of Hollywood and the commercial fiction film; and to allow the objects of history — film clips, images, texts, sounds — to "come into their own" here rather means to tear them away, dismantle them from their original contexts in these films, in order to remount them into a new one, in which they can use their inherent power to tell the story they were themselves not allowed to tell: the story about the 20th century and its catastrophes and utopias. However, unlike the *Arcades Project*, *Histoire(s) du cinéma* does not in any apparent way fall back on a messianic faith. Even in his most pessimistic texts and fragments, Benjamin seems to uphold an underlying belief in an "awakening", in the arrival of a new, revolutionary age that can transcend the disaster of the present. In Godard there does not seem to exist any corresponding faith, and *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, in the end, instead resembles a vast, apocalyptic tombstone to cinema and its histories, which, according to an intricate temporal figure, wants to re-

store the fragments of history to what they *could have* been, in order thereby to erect a monument for resistance against the present. However, aside from the differences between Benjamin and Godard, one could, in these grandiose projects, find a common, second way of thinking the politics of collage: it has a redemptive force; it can, through its ability to insert the objects of history into a historiographic narrative that at the same time upholds their integrity, tear them away from their established contexts and traditions, and restore their true nature, creating a messianic promise or a monument for untimely resistance.

One can also speak of a third way to understand the politics of collage, where it is instead employed as a form of knowledge: collage as the model for a critical historiography, but without messianic claims or apocalyptic pessimism. In his recent study on two books by Bertolt Brecht, the *Arbeitsjournal* and the *War Primer*, Georges Didi-Huberman writes: "⟨This is⟩ what Brecht names an *art of historicizing*: an art that breaks the continuity of narrations, extracts their differences and, recomposing these differences themselves, restitutes the essentially 'critical' value of all historicity."[10] Brecht's books, which in different ways approach the experience of WWII, are both based on a montage, or, rather, collage technique: they combine text passages, quotes and cut-out images into heterogeneous wholes. The *Arbeitsjournal* collects Brecht's notes from his years in exile 1933–1955, and assembles them with newspaper cuttings and different types of reproductions, according to an open, organic method. The *War Primer* is a sort of curious children's book for grown-ups, which in a more systematic fashion combines photographs of the horrors of the war with short prose passages and poems. Both books could be said to apply the "art of historicizing" about which Didi-Huberman writes: they break the continuity of the stories about the war, reveal their fissures and internal contradictions, and then aggregate their elements into critical stories. But these books do not, for this reason, constitute exceptions to Brecht's "normal" practice as a poet and playwright. There is, Didi-Huberman claims, an elaborate collage or montage aesthetic in Brecht, which sets his fundamental theoretical and methodological concepts into play, and is operative in all aspects of his work. For Brecht, to break the continuity of the story by tearing away the images and the texts

10. Georges Didi-Huberman, *Quand les images prennent position: l'oeil de l'histoire 1* (Paris: Minuit, 2009), 68.

from their given contexts does not mean to restore them to their true nature, to allow them to come into their own, in accordance with Benjamin's and Godard's redemptive logic. It is instead a critical operation, which aims to expose these objects as something foreign — what Brecht with his most famous term names "*Verfremdung*", the distanciation that breaks the spectator's or reader's identification with the characters of epic theatre, and disturbs her empathy with plots and illusions.

But what does "foreign" mean in this context? This word should not be understood as synonymous with "bizarre" or "alien"; it does not refer to a phenomenon whose intrusion into an established order is frightening or threatening. The foreign in Brecht is the familiar, an element of the established order, but torn away from its apparent naturalness. "In what follows", Brecht writes, "'foreign' should never be understood in the sense of 'bizarre'. There is not the least interest in presenting the processes on the stage as curious, incomprehensible phenomena. The task, instead, is precisely to render them comprehensible. ⟨…⟩ Art should not present things as evident ⟨…⟩, nor as incomprehensible, but as comprehensible, only not yet comprehended."[11] In short, distanciation denaturalizes the narrative — the dramatic one as well as the historiographic one. A denaturalized narrative does not only show a certain development, in order to implicitly present it as unavoidable, but also shows *that* it shows it, in order to allow it to appear in its contingent and heterogeneous nature. Each collage is necessarily based on such a distanciation, and sets to work what Didi-Huberman names a "*knowledge through strangeness*": in order to assemble collage's heterogeneous elements one must first separate them, tear them away, distance them from their given contexts; and therefore it is only with collage or montage, now understood as a form of knowledge or principle of analysis, that history itself can be dismantled, exposed in its non-naturalness, that its discontinuities and contingencies may be revealed. In other words: it is only before the gaze of the collage or montage artist that history can achieve its essentially critical value — as montage. Montage, Didi-Huberman writes in another context, "is not the factual creation of a temporal continuity ⟨…⟩. It is, on the contrary, a way of *visually unfolding the discontinuities of time* at work in each sequence of history."[12]

11. Bertolt Brecht, 'On Distanciation', quoted in *Quand les images prennent position*, 70.

12. Didi-Huberman, *L'image survivante: Histoire de l'art et temps des fantômes selon Aby Warburg* (Paris: Minuit, 2002), 474.

On account of the celebration of cinema's "100th birth-day" in 1995, Harun Farocki — one of the contemporary artists who in the most apparent fashion remains close to a Brechtian method — was commissioned to produce a film that reflected upon the history of cinema. The result was a collage composition — a "documentary montage", Didi-Huberman would say, with a concept coined by Benjamin — in which Farocki returned to film history's own repetitions of one of its moments of origin: the Lumière brothers' first film, which shows how the workers at their lamp factory in Lyon leave their workplace at the end of the day and swarm out through the gates of the factory complex. *Arbeiter verlassen die Fabrik* assembles the different sequences in film history that return to this motif: Charlie Chaplin causes a riot in front of his workplace in *Modern Times*; Marilyn Monroe bickers with her boyfriend outside of a fish cannery in Fritz Lang's *Clash by Night*; strike-breakers and starving unemployed workers fight in Pudovkin; proletarians take control of the means of production in a Soviet propaganda reel; we also see state of the art surveillance imagery and commercials for road blocks and security technologies. A number of conditions are exposed in this aggregate of sequences and scenes. In an article about this film, partly based on the text that is read in its soundtrack, Farocki establishes that "films about work or workers have not become one of the main genres, and the space in front of the factory has remained on the sidelines. Most narrative films take place in that part of life where work has been left behind."[13] If the images of the crowd in front of the factory gates, however, constitute exceptions in the history of fiction films, they have on the contrary remained a *topos* in the tradition of documentary and propaganda films. Why? Farocki finds the answer through the montage of his own film, which exposes the rhetorical figure at work in the assembled imagery. "The work structure", he points out, "synchronizes the workers, the factory gates group them, and this process of compression produces the image of a work force".[14]

In the political films that Farocki samples — which originate from all segments of the spectrum of ideologies — the image of the workers therefore has a clear function: it offers an effective instrument in order to show the workers as a united force. However, Farocki's film also tells us something else: that this

13. Harun Farocki, 'Workers Leaving the Factory', in *Nachdruck/Imprint: Texte/Writings*, ed. Gaensheimer & Schafhausen, transl. Faasch-Ibrahim (New York/Berlin: Lukas & Sternberg/Vorwerk 8, 2001), 232.

14. Ibid, 234.

image will gradually lose its rhetorical efficiency. As the ideal of the people is progressively repressed from political consciousness, the image of the crowd will consequently be marginalized, withdrawn from the public eye and mind. The propaganda film that shows the united force of the workers is replaced by the digital surveillance footage, which is decoded and put into action within the closed circuit of the computer and the industrial robot, without any gaze ever having to fall upon it. The crowd disappears from the public spectacle of the moving images. This, of course, does not mean that it ceases to exist. It means that its mode of existence is another, that it prevails as an anachronism, and that it is therefore only the techniques and operations of collage that can render it visible.

Adversary

2010
HD video (colour)
15 mins
Installation

In *Adversary*, the focus remains fixed on the relationship between the individual and the crowd. The film and video installation is based on extracts from a number of important works from the history of cinema: scenes where the protagonist is placed in a crowd situation. The extracts are drawn from five films: Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927), Roberto Rossellini's *Viaggio in Italia* (1954), Don Siegel's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956), Michelangelo Antonioni's *Eclisse* (1962), and Jean-Luc Godard's *Alphaville* (1965).

For *Adversary*, Ådahl dissects these scenes by singling out one actor, removing the scenery, other actors and extras, as well as music, diegetic sounds, and dialogs, leaving only the protagonist, surrounded by an absent crowd. Ådahl has then asked the actor Livia Millhagen to re-enact these scenes alone in an empty white space. The dialoges are later added, using a male voice-over.

With its strict rules, this process of dissection and re-enactment itself becomes a performative work for the artist and her collaborators.

Adversary is made in two versions: one film version, which consists of a montage of the re-enacted scenes, and one installation, where the process of dissection and re-enactment is rendered visible and operative in the space: the film is projected on a screen, next to which a plasma screen is placed, featuring a montage of the original scenes; a centrally placed loudspeaker transmits the sounds of the actor during the re-enactment; surrounding speakers transmit the ambient sounds from the space in which the re-enactment was shot; and a separate speaker placed next to the spectator bench transmits the voice-over with the dialogs from the original scenes.

For Ådahl, the process of dissection and re-enactment constitutes an attempt to grasp the essence of the gestures of the individual in the given context. It also aims to examine the work of fiction related to the specific relationships between crowd and individual; as well as to analyze the directorial work in the separate scenes, with their different camera angles, framings, cuts, and gestures.
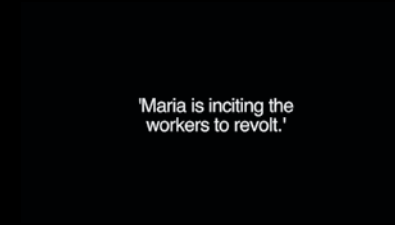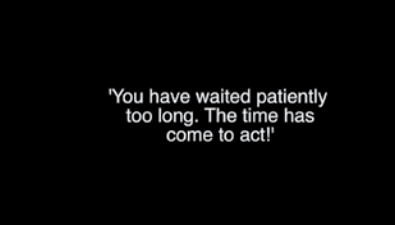
Alphaville (1965)
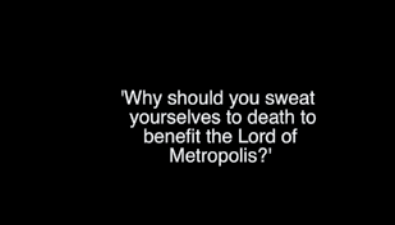Jean-Luc Godard

Metropolis (1927)
Fritz Lang

'Who keeps the
machines going?'

'Maria is inciting the
workers to revolt.'

'Who are the slaves
of the machines?'

'You have waited patiently
too long. The time has
come to act!'

'Let the machines stop!'

'Why should you sweat
yourselves to death to
benefit the Lord of
Metropolis?'

Not one man or
woman remained
behind.

'Destroy the machines!'

'John Federsens son!'

'Kill him!'

'To the central power house!'

'You are not Maria!'

'Let no one remain behind,
we're destroying
the machines!'

'Maria pleads for peace,
not for violence.. This is
not Maria!'

Original scenes —
Reference material

Metropolis (1927)
Fritz Lang

Alphaville (1965)
Jean-Luc Godard

Viaggio in Italia (1954)
Roberto Rossellini

L'eclisse (1962)
Michelangelo
Antonioni

Invasion of the
Bodysnatchers (1956)
Don Siegel
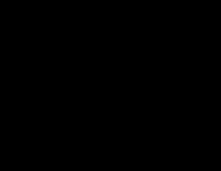
Anna Ådahl

NOTES ON GESTURE

gesture
noun, verb, -tured, -turing

1. A movement or position of the hand,
arm, body, head or face that is expres-
sive of an idea, opinion, emotion, etc.:
the gestures of an orator; a threatening
gesture.

2. The use of such movements to express
thought, emotion, etc.

3. Any action, courtesy, communication,
etc., intended for effect or as a formality;
considered expression; demonstration: a
gesture of friendship.
— verb (used without object)

4. To make or use a gesture or gestures.
— verb (used with object)

5. To express by a gesture or gestures.

•

The gesture as the embodiment of my
ideas, an act that will lead to a concrete
existence of an artwork.

•

I don't use gesture as a stylized movement
but as a seized expression.

175

•

"The movements of the soul were born
with the same progression as those
of the body."[1]
— Montaigne

Some gestures occur subconsciously, the
"natural gestures".
The "natural gesture" is a gesture we
often seek or wish to hide because of its
tendency to reveal our inner thoughts and
emotions.

•

"Gesture opens the sphere of ethos
as the most fitting sphere of the
human."[2]
— Giorgio Agamben

•

The human gesture may be the most
sincere expression. It can embellish,
alter, complete, or be a complement to
language.

"The gesture shows the emotional
condition from which the words flow,
and justifies them."
— François Delsarte

The gesture in silent film or in scenes with-
out dialogues may allow for a larger free-
dom, have a wider, even universal appeal.

"An ordinary action such as pouring
a cup of coffee may turn into a
gesture if it is noticed by someone
else to be in some way unique, out
of the ordinary, or expressive in
manner."[3]

A gesture must be noticed by a receiver in
order for it to be considered a gesture. I
therefore exhibit, film, save and document
it.

"Model. You give him directions of
gestures and speech. In return he
gives you a substance (recorded by
the camera)."
("Modèle. Tu lui dictes des gestes
et des paroles. Il te donne en
retour (ta caméra enregistre) une
substance".)[4]
— Robert Bresson

Gestures as tools for fiction.

"What no human eye is capable of
catching, no pencil, brush, pen of
pinning down, your camera catches
without knowing what it is, and pins
it down with a machine's scrupulous
indifference."
("Ta caméra non seulement attrape
des mouvements physiques inattra-
pables par le crayon, le pinceau ou
la plume, mais aussi certains états

d'âme reconnaissables à des indices
non décelables sans elle.")[5]
— Robert Bresson

How to use and analyze the role of the
camera's gesture?

The search of the gesture in the moving
image, the fictionalized gesture.

> "Gesture rather than image is the
> cinematic element."[6]
> — Giorgio Agamben

•

The search of the gesture through analysis
and experiment, a singled out gesture.
To find a gesture through a specific
process which in itself becomes a gesture.

•

The search of a gesture in a specific
context is a way of redefining its truth.

•

A gesture can be repeated for more than
a thousand years, and suddenly, on
account of the performer and the context,
it becomes political.

•

In the past some gestures became political
symbols (such as the erect arm in the
Nazi regime or the fist for the freedom of
workers). In consequence these gestures
have been charged with a signification
that makes it nearly impossible to re-use
them: the impossible gestures.

How can you redefine these gestures?
And what role will they play in a redefined
context, chosen with an awareness of their
impossibility?

•

A gesture can be individual, operated by
one human body. A subjective gesture.

> "The gesture is the thing truly expres-
> sive of the individual — as we think
> so will we act."
> — Martha Graham

Can a gesture performed by many indi-
viduals together become subjective?

A gesture can become universal by
recognition: historical gestures; political
gestures; common behaviour.

A gesture can become general, political
or religious when it is performed by many
bodies/individuals.

An individual's body is by nature part of
a bigger whole, therefore its gestures
depend and relate to other human bodies.

A gesture performed by many can become
one: crowd gestures.

> "As soon as a man has surrendered
> himself to the crowd, he ceases to
> fear its touch. Ideally, all are equal
> there; no distinctions count, not even
> that of sex. The man pressed against
> him is the same as himself. He feels
> him as he feels himself."[7]
> — Elias Canetti

Crowd gestures are susceptible to the laws
of imitation.

> "There is a determination in their
> movement which is quite different
> from the expression of ordinary curi-
> osity. It seems as though the move-
> ment of some of them transmits itself
> to the others."[7]
> — Elias Canetti

How to define:
An individual gesture within a crowd?

How to stage:
A crowd gesture performed by an indi-
vidual, alone?

How to re-enact:
A gesture lost in the crowd, retrieved?

•

> "Multitude, solitude: identical terms,
> and interchangeable by the active
> and fertile poet. The man who is
> unable to people his solitude is
> equally unable to be alone in a
> bustling crowd."
> — Charles Baudelaire

•

The gesture as the movement and vital
expression of the human body.

The vital gestures are hardly detectable
by the human eye, yet indispensable.
The heartbeat and breathing are highly
individual and in the same time the most
universal gestures. These gestures are
constant and vital. When they stop, lethal.
A dead body has no signs of gesture.

•

> "Words and objects are accordingly
> the emanations and products of a
> single unified experience: represen-
> tation by means of the hands."[7]
> — Elias Canetti

Gestures can leave traces. Gestures can therefore alter matter and objects. Repeated or multiple gestures can transform an object into another.

1. *Notes on Cinematography,* 1950–58, Robert Bresson, translation Jonathan Griffin, Urizen Books, New York, 1977.
2. *Infancy and History, On the Destruction of Experience,* Giorgio Agamben, translation Liz Heron, Verso, London–New York, 2007.
3. 'Gesture', Marcia Friel, The University of Chicago: Theories of Media: Keywords Glossary: Gesture, (csmt.uchicago.edu), 2007.
4. *Notes sur le cinématographe,* 1950–58, Robert Bresson, Galli- mard, 1975 (translation to English Anna Ådahl).
5. *Notes sur le cinématographe,* 1950–58, Robert Bresson, Galli- mard, 1975. *Notes on Cinematography,* Robert Bresson, translation Jonathan Griffin, Urizen Books, New York, 1977.
6. *Infancy and History, On the Destruction of Experience,* Giorgio Agamben, translation Liz Heron, Verso, London–New York, 2007.
7. *Crowds and Power,* Elias Canetti, 1960, translation Carol Stewart, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 1984.
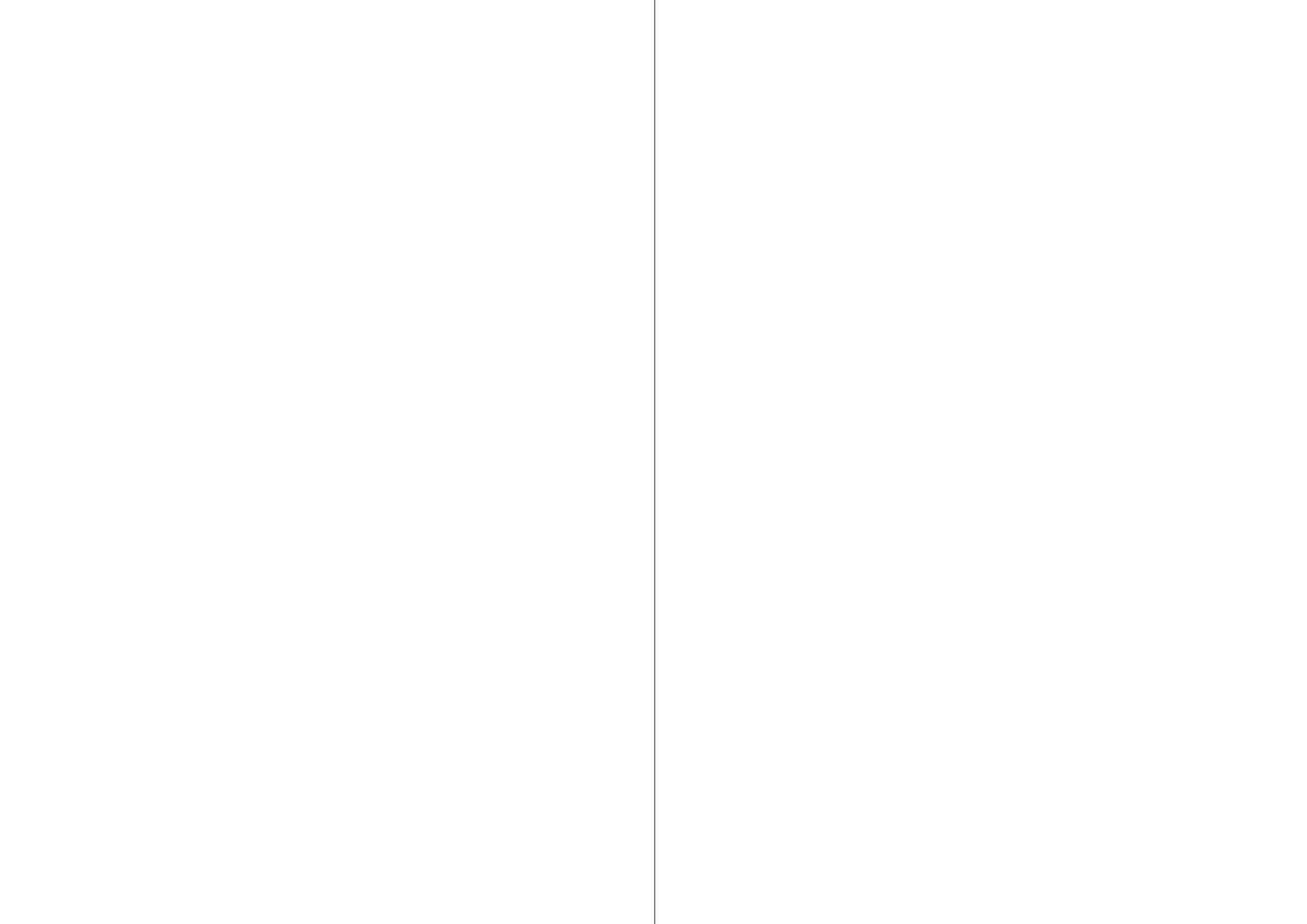
Anna Ådahl
Born 1973

Education:
Ecole Nationale Supèrieure des Beaux arts de Paris, France, 1993–99, post-graduate 1999–2000; Royal University College of Fine Arts, Stockholm, Sweden 2005–6; Central Saint Martins, London, UK, 1998.

Exhibition and screenings, in selection, 1999–2009:

2009: *Biennale: Fotografi Nu, Small Parts of the world:* CCF, Stockholm, Sweden; EESC, Brussels, Belgium; *Les Rencontres Internationales Paris/Berlin/Madrid,* Reina Sofia National Museum, Madrid, Spain, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, Germany.

2008: *Les Rencontres Internationales Paris/Berlin/Madrid,* Le Nouveau Latina, Paris; *Tell a friend,* Bonniers Konsthall, Stockholm, Sweden; *Crowd: 0-infinity,* curated by Guillaume Désanges, Art Center for Contemporary Arts, La Tolerie, Clermont-Ferrand, France.

2007: *World of tomorrow,* with group Vinter, Klarabiografen, Kulturhuset, Stockholm, Sweden; *Staging Independence,* (solo exhibition), ak28, Stockholm, Sweden; *Peer 2 peer,* K2 Art center, Izmir, Turkey.

2006: *L'Usage du monde,* curated by Ana Janewski, Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Rijeka, Croatia; *Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennial,* Echigo-Tsumari, Japan, *Two scenes in three acts,* Teater3, Stockholm, Sweden (concept, organisation and production of seminars, video screenings and exhibition, in collaboration with Diana Kaur).

2005: *Analogue Fictions,* curated by Florence Derieux, Istanbul Biennale, Istanbul, Turkey; *Living Room,* curated by Maria-Ines Rodriguez, Espacio La Rebeca, Bogota, Colombia; *ICI!* curated by Veronica Wiman, Southern Exposure, San Francisco; *Coté Court,* Pantin, Paris, France.

2004: *Art & Video... Ou sont les femmes?,* Lieu Unique, Nantes, France; *Maisons/Témoins,* curated by Julie Pellegrin, The Store, Paris; *KONST2,* Stockholm, Sweden; *Nuit Blanche, Sema'(Didem)* (solo exhibition), Centre Culturel Suédois, Paris, France.

2003: *Anna Ådahl, Laetitia Bénat, Philip Terrier-Hermann,* curated by Florence Derieux, Hammer Sidi Gallery, London, UK; *Let's Emotionalize,* site specific exhibition in collaboration with Malmö Konstmuseum, Malmö, Sweden; *Georges abstraction surface air, Bureau des vidéos/Artview,* Le Georges, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France.

2002: *Le Rêve,* collaboration with choreogapher Fabrice Lambert, Teatro Goldoni, Venice Biennale for Contemporary Dance, Venice, Italy; *Rencontre Internationale Chorégraphique de Seine Saint Denis,* MC93, Bobigny (Paris), France; *Mona,* Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France; *Artgenda Film Festival,* Metropolis Kino, Hamburg, Germany; *L'Èpicerie+/-,* Cetinje Biennale IV, Monténegro.

2001: Le Bonheur 2001, restaurant Le Bonheur, video/diner/karaoke in collaboration with artist Virginie Yassef, Paris, France; TOPO, collaboration with Fabrice Lambert, touring in France; Don't play... with me because I know you (solo exhibition), Public<, Paris, France; Anna Ådahl, (solo exhibition), Window 42 Gallery, London, UK.

2000: *I Don't Want To Be Here,* YYZ Artist's Outlet, Toronto, Canada.

1999: *Festival international du cinéma francophone en Acadie,* Moncton, Canada; *Tranz-Tech, Toronto* International Media Art Biennale, Canada; *Liste 99,* Glassbox & Field, Bazel, Switzerland; *Anna Ådahl & Jorn Ebner,* Mota Gallery, curated by Patricia Kohl, London, U.K; *Félicités,* Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-arts de Paris, France.

Biographies

Stefan Jonsson is senior cultural critic at *Dagens Nyheter*, Associate Professor of aesthetics at Södertörn University, and Visiting Professor at the Remeso Institute, in Norrköping, Sweden. A graduate of the Program in Literature at Duke University, he has been fellow at the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles (1998–2000) and visiting professor at University of Michigan (2006). His most recent books are *A Brief History of the Masses. Three revolutions, 1789, 1889, 1989*.

Diana Kaur is a freelance curator, editor and producer, based in Stockholm.

Mara Lee is a writer and poet, based in Stockholm. She teaches art writing at the University College of Arts Crafts and Design in Stockholm, Folkhögskolan Biskops Arnö in Stockholm and Academy of Fine Arts in Umeå.

Federico Nicolao is a writer.

Fanny Stenberg is an architect and production designer, based in Stockhom. She writes for the magazines *Kulturo* and *Forum*. She guest teaches at the Interior Architecture department of the University College of Arts and Design in Stockholm.

Fabien Vallos is a writer, philosopher and publisher (Mix editions) based in Paris. He teaches art theory at l'École des Beaux-arts de Bordeaux and at l'École Supérieure des Beaux-arts d'Angers and is a guest lecturer at l'École Nationale Supérieure de Photographie d'Arles

Sven-Olov Wallenstein teaches philosophy and aesthetics at Södertörn University in Stockholm, and is the editor-in-chief of *SITE*. He is the translator of works by Winckelmann, Kant, Hegel, Frege, Husserl, Heidegger, Levinas, Derrida, Deleuze, and Agamben, as well as the author of numerous books on philosophy, art, and architecture. Recent publications *include Essays, Lectures* (2007), *The Silences of Mies* (2008), *1930/31: Swedish Modernism at the Crossroads* (with Helena Mattsson, 2009), and *Biopolitics and the Emergence of Modern Architecture* (2009).

Kim West is a critic and translator, based in Stockholm. He is an editor of *SITE* Magazine and a member of the editorial commitee of *OEI*. Recent and upcoming publications include essays on Georges Didi-Huberman and Jean-Luc Godard, as well as a translation of Michel Foucault's *Sécurité, territoire, population*. He teaches art theory at the University College of Arts Crafts and Design in Stockholm.

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For Andreas Ådahl

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■ 7. Alexander Rodchenko, *Spatial Construction*, 1920–21. © Alexander Rodchenko/BUS 2010
■ 8. Axonometric Art, Gustav Klutsis, 1920
■ 9. Varvara Stepanova, collage, 1919. © Varvara Fedorovna Stepanova/BUS 2010
■ 10. Information board from Nykvarns People's Park
■ 11. Gustav Klutsis, reproduction of a russian propaganda poster from 1930
■ 12. *acceptera*, Gunnar Asplund, Wolter Gahn, Sven Markelius, Gregor Paulsson, Eskil Sundahl, Uno Åhrén, 1931

Diana Kaur (red)
Stefan Jonsson
Mara Lee
Federico Nicolao
Fanny Stenberg
Fabien Vallos
Sven-Olov Wallenstein
Kim West