The frustrated witness. Realizing near misses within temporary exhibitions

31 May 2015 13:00-17:00
Research Pavilion
Sala del Camino, Campo S. Cosmo
Giudecca, 621 Venice
http://www.uniarts.fi/en/research-pavilion

Part of the Academy of Fine Arts, University of the Arts Helsinki programme at the 56th Venice Biennale.

The desire to be present, and to prove that presence by means of instantaneously disseminated photographs, continues to rise. So too in reverse; in order for an event to have validity it must be witnessed and shared by as many people as possible (preferably those with expensive cameras).

Within the contemporary art world the trend for re-enactment similarly shows no sign of abating, its gaze turning steadily inwards as critical performances and exhibitions from the 1960s and 70s are restaged for a new public and higher quality documentation. Given that any attempt to entirely recreate an experience is pre-destined to fail, can the de-contextualised restaging of these events produce new meanings that fully compensate for the artifice, or are we always left a little disappointed?

This symposium will consider works that take this lack as a starting point, in other words that critically engage with the problematics of facilitating an impossible encounter. Whether in grandiose projects that deal with seminal moments in art history – such as the revisiting of the exhibition When Attitudes Become Form at the 2013 Venice Biennale – or in individual pieces on a more personal scale, the relation of the audience to the absent event is questioned.

In some, strategies of obfuscation are employed in apparent contradiction to the attempt to communicate, frustrating the expectations of the visitor. Elsewhere the information is held tantalisingly just out of reach, snatched away as soon as it is grasped for. In all cases, rather than the spectator simply occupying the role of an invisible witness, she finds herself to be the focus of attention.

SCHEDULE
13.00-13.20 Opening remarks and Flis Holland (first)
13.20-14.05 Florian Dombois: What Are the Places of Danger
14.05-14.15 Coffee break
14.15-14.35 Flis Holland (second)
14.35-15.20 Juuso Tervo: Frustrated presence
15.20-15.30 Coffee break
15.30-15.50 Flis Holland (third)
15:50-16:35 Hans Rosenström: Dependent structures
16:35 Closing discussion
Florian Dombois is an artist who focuses on landforms, labilities, seismic and tectonic activity, scientific and technical fictions, as well as on their various representational and media formats. Dombois studied geophysics and philosophy in Berlin, Kiel and Hawaii, and wrote his PhD in Amsterdam and Berlin. After that, he has developed a concept of "Art as Research" to extend scientific modes of expression. His oeuvre includes spatial and sound installations, but also happenings and performances. Dombois has written several essays and books. He has given talks, conference contributions and lectureships at art schools and universities (a.o. Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie Karlsruhe, Bundeskunsthalle Bonn, Artcenter Los Angeles, ATR Kioto, MIT Cambridge). Since 2003 he is heading the Institute for Transdisciplinarity (Y), and is president of the research council at Berne University of the Arts. In 2010 he received the German Sound Art Prize.

Flis Holland explores the compulsion to revisit locations that are no longer accessible to us, and how these sites that are embedded in our subconscious affect our daily interactions with the built environment. By using scale models in her constructed photographs, Holland facilitates both her own return to particular sites, and our accompaniment beside her. Holland from Newcastle England has a MFA from The University of Leeds. Since 2011 she has been based in Helsinki to work on her DFA at the Academy of Fine Arts, University of Arts Helsinki.

Hans Rosenström is a Finnish artists who lives and works in London. Rosenström works with installations that deal with the viewer’s psychological and physical relationship with a specific moment or space. Rosenström utilises different materials such as sound, texts, lights and built elements in his work. The emphasis is on the presence of the viewer, the work is not fulfilled until it’s experienced.

Juuso Tervo is currently working as a postdoctoral researcher at the Department of Art at Aalto University. He received his MA in art education from Aalto University in 2011 and his PhD in art education from The Ohio State University in 2014. His doctoral dissertation focused on political theorization in art education research. His research interests include the political philosophy of art and education and the aesthetics of theory.