

## Tiden går inte längre: A Hear, See, Silence Collage

### An Artistic Collage

The exhibition *Tiden går inte längre* that was produced in Stockholm's Fylkingen was a discursive exercise between contemporary art and music, readings and community work information displays that centered around the problematic topic of sexual child abuse. In the main venue of Fylkingen a collaborative art installation by Patric Simmerud together with architect/artist **Patrik Qvist** and animator **Shabnam Faraee** pushed spectators into a world of experience. Visitors' eyes get set on a small red wooden cabin, a Swedish symbol mostly associated with fun and leisure times. However, this visual rendition is immediately countered by the eerie children's music box driven sound art that accompanies it. Visitor's ears adjust their view and render the idyllic symbol into a desolate scene. The accurate contrast forces the spectators to immediately lower their voices. No spinning ballerinas here. Inside the cabin, an animated short film projection emphasizes the survival mode of the adult abused child from an abstract point of view. The strong visual and textual poetics of the film in combination with a radiophonic piece render a universal experience of anxiety cured by desolation. All in all, the art installation renders the experience of child abuse in several emotion-driven layers. It expresses a trauma of the past, the present, the internal and the external.

The artistic body of the exhibition was complemented with musical performances by **Mika Takehara** and Patric Simmerud. Whereas the art installation mainly raised questions, the percussion-driven compositions *Vassala* (Takehara/Simmerud), *Remembrance* (Simmerud), *WO* (Simmerud), *Kaiso* (improvisation) and *Transients, formants & gestures* (Simmerud) provided a therapeutic answer to the experience of child abuse. In addition to the artistic, the exhibition existed out of a programme that aimed to provide answers in scientific and other bodies of knowledge. Readings by researchers and lecturers **Lena Berg** and **Josefin Grände** are combined with the presence of community and social work organizations **Hopp Stockholm**, **Stockholms Tjejour** and **Män för Jämställdhet**.

The addition of readings from a cultural, social and therapeutic perspective as well as informative displays on child abuse rendered the artworks a strong voice that give them visibility in their topical discourse. In that sense, **individual pieces of the exhibition no longer speak for themselves**, but rather become part of a dialogue that exists between the different artistic, scientific and other knowledge bodies of the exhibition creating a complex narrative that resembles a collage on the topic.

### A Curatorial Collage

The discursive mode of the exhibition also forced the spectators to stop and think about **the curatorial power** of not focussing solely on the experience of the traumatizing object or the traumatized person. Instead of the limited exploration of how we express trauma through artworks, the exhibition **additionally looked into how artworks gain orientation in their narrative by making use of the experience of their environment**.

This became most clear in the composition *Transients, formants & gestures* in which the ending percussion sequence is performed on four ordinary houseplates. During the ensemble piece the plates are sequentially shattered by a hammer into several pieces, making it possible to explore these household items musically. However, as a spectator it is impossible not to interpret this sequence in the light of the central exhibition topic. An interpretation only strengthened by the finale in which the plates are completely crushed by percussionist Takehara. The contrast between, on the one side, the homely items and the fragility of the porcelain, and on the other side, the increasingly high tones and brute force by which the plates are turned into scrapnel are reminiscent of domestic violence. That creation of narrative in the mind of the spectator is an interpretation mainly driven by the dialogue that exists between the context of the exhibition and the musical performance itself. Most of the compositions – with the exception of the improvisation *Kaiso* – already existed before the creation of the exhibition and therefore had no direct relation to the theme as such.

Therefore, the narrative that the curatorial collage approach creates in the mind of the visitors may touch upon the tension between the **artist/curator's intentions and the spectators' interpretation**. In the case of *Tiden går inte längre*, the interpretation of the individual elements seems to be strongly fueled by the overall exhibition theme. Accordingly, the topical discourse takes over the probability of interpreting the individual pieces in line with the potential, authentic artistic intentions. Without a doubt this deserves a discussion in its own right. However, *Tiden går inte längre* is a good example of an exhibition that might be served and/or problematized by its all-encompassing topical narrative when individual artworks are interpreted in isolation. After all, *Tiden går inte längre* is partially made up of elements that *do not* in themselves belong thematically, which becomes conceptually most clear in the scene smashes of plates.

This also brings us to what sets this exhibition apart from other exhibitions that are to a large extent driven by contemporary music. In general it can be stated that the curatorial approaches used with regard to contemporary music usually derive the overall exhibition theme from the musical elements itself, possibly strengthened by additional, extra-musical artistic elements. In the case of *Tiden går inte längre*, the opposite may be more true. It is the topical discourse, the context itself that reigns the curatorial approach. The integration of contemporary music in this strongly contextual environment provides ways to gain new audiences and to broaden spectators' understanding of what contemporary music can stand for. Both results can be interesting ways to create additional attention for an art form that is by many outside the field still regarded as not easily accessible.