
THIS IS AN ARTWORK!

SOCIALLY EMBEDDED ART IN CONTEMPORARY ART PRACTICES

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ABSTRACT

Through this paper we examine the process of how an object can exist in different spatial contexts, and how these contexts have an impact on the character of the object. Our interest lies in how a specific spatial context has the power to define an object, and vice versa, i. e. how the object can produce an impact over a specific space, defining people's interaction within that space and with the object. The main focus of analysis is a caravan, which has been part of a redesign and refurbishing of the shelter Mændenes Hjem (under the project *Radical Horizontality* by artist Kenneth A. Balfelt) and is currently exhibited at Statens Museum for Kunst. By exploring the transition of locations that has experienced this object we are able to define the caravan and its spatial environment – in the past and now. Further on we argue how the use of art and beautification of spatial surroundings influence the users, when at the same time we discuss the social practices and processes of contemporary art. Additionally, we challenge observations and findings through a theoretical context about the interaction with museums (art)objects. Our findings suggest that there is a distinct change of identity of the caravan according to its spatial context. This change is based on the current consideration of the caravan as an art piece, although the original intention – to create a space that promotes a unique social interaction among users/visitors -, and the use of it as such is fairly consistent.

KEYWORDS

Contemporary art, Space, Spatial context, Installation art, Social change, Social perspectives, Radical Horizontality, Physical beautification, Kenneth A. Balfelt

SMK 

Dette er et kunstværk!

/ This is an Artwork!

Du er velkommen til at gå ind i det

- men pas godt på det!

/ You are welcome to enter

- but please take good care of it!

Max 5 personer ad gangen.

/ Max. 5 persons at a time.

Statens Museum for Kunst
National Gallery of Denmark

INTRODUCTION

Walking through the magnificent space of the Sculpture Street in Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen, Denmark, one can easily find a curious and unusual artwork, a slightly old caravan placed in the far right side of the corridor. The caravan holds a big sign in front of its entrance, reminding the museum visitors that it is an artwork and therefore, it should be treated as such. This sign is shown on a photograph on the previous page (photograph no. 1). Next to it, a television plays repeatedly an explanatory video of half an hour and a poster gives few details on the meaning of this peculiar artwork. Visitors pass by; some of them enter the caravan, sit down, and listen to the songs displayed by a music player hanging on a wall. Other visitors walk around it with some kind of surprise, few read the poster and seem interested while most leave the space without much understanding of the piece. For some reason that piece caught our attention and all those signs let us know a little bit of its *raison d'être* - a starting point for our case study: Kenneth A Balfelt's caravan.

The caravan formed part of the Danish artists Kenneth A Balfelt and FOS's redesign of Mændenes Hjem, a shelter for the homeless in Istedgade in Copenhagen, where it was used as a space for meetings from 2004 until 2013. Both artists seek to reach out to a different reality outside the realm of art by working with design, user involvement and functional sculptures. Moreover, Mændenes Hjem's renovation had the aim to create a space that would support greater equality in the relationship between the shelter's users and the workers. By using space design the artists believe that a change in social behaviour can be achieved, i.e. artists have the potential to allow greater scope for social openness and dialogue through the way they design space. Hence, the main idea was to install a space that entailed a familiar, home-like environment for the homeless, encouraging greater contact between them and the social workers.

The caravan was removed in 2013 to make room for a new drug-consumption space at the shelter. At that time it was acquired by Statens Museums for Kunst, becoming part of its collection and being exhibited as an artwork at its main hall. The caravan has obviously experienced a great displacement - from a shelter to the National Gallery of Denmark. Yet still, it pretends to offer a space where the museum visitors may be able to perform, interact and experience a different behaviour among these walls, i. e. far

away from the protocolary character expected in this kind of major museums. If this maximum is achieved is another matter, but clearly this is a concern that most museums are working on, trying to eliminate the barriers between visitors and institutions and offering art committed to social issues. Indeed, museums are attempting to thrive in circumstances ranging from personal challenges to social injustices, new roles on which these institutions seem to be increasingly linked. At the same time, contemporary art is approaching social spheres. According to Jocelyn Cunningham's *"The arts are an intrinsic part of a society and part of the daily needs of its citizens (...) It is necessary to normalise their presence in everyday life. Perceiving them as a luxury means that other sectors fail to reach their full value. (...) It must also engage with the many intangible but crucial aspects of a good life such as well-being, identity, community, empathy, aspiration and hope. There is an urgency to strengthen this fragile cultural ecosystem in times of stress."* (Cunningham 2013, 30).

The mentioned displacement of the caravan has our great interest, as we analyse further on how this designed object impacts in two different spatial contexts. At the same time, we examine how its primary reason for being, a meeting room for a city shelter, can be susceptible to be considered a social artwork, and therefore, stand in a museum such as Statens Museum for Kunst. Thus, this article discusses how space defines an object, and vice versa, how an object defines space. By analysing the spatial transition of Kenneth A Balfelt's caravan we are able to examine the uses of the so-called social art, i. e. those kinds of artistic practices and processes of contemporary art increasingly driven by a need to create a social impact within a community. Moreover, how the beautification of spatial surroundings may influence the users and last but not least, contributing with observations and issues that relate to the interaction between museum and artworks. In order to give a clear vision of the topic discussed here – the caravan, we contextualize both social art, i. e. the contemporary genre that through the use of art installations manages to express that for which it struggles, the social change; and the shelter of Mændenes Hjem, former context of this artwork.

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THE SOCIAL PRACTICES AND PROCESSES OF ART

In common with other areas of activity, art practice operates within an environment of institutions and groups of people, which effectively maintain it as an identifiable activity within society. This defines what can be called “art’s social environment” (Williats 2000). In what follows, we discuss several theoretical approaches to social art, i.e. an artistic tendency that use creative skills to work with people and organizations to affect some kind of improvement or social change within a community.

Art as a social practice/process

During the decade of the 1990’s, the art market, its modes of circulation and the political attitude towards it changed considerably, as well as the impact of the biennials and art fairs, which also increased (Williats 2000). The general activity that surrounded art – its media, infrastructure and social activity – became as prominent and energetic as art itself (Larsen 2012).

Declared dead along with the avant-garde, the visual art experienced a revival during this time. No longer something academic or monumental, art became a situation or a process, which the audience had to experience by first hand and the academic world had the difficult task of analyze (Larsen 2012). Art was conceptualized in infinity of shapes, forms and contexts. Two significant cases of that were Rirkrit Tiravanija’s soup kitchens¹ and Angela Bulloch’s beanbags². In both cases the viewer was not presented with a work of art, but instead was placed in a situation that radically questioned our traditional relationship with art works within a gallery environment (Coulter-Smith 2006). Other relevant exponents of this trend were the Cuban-born

¹ In 1992, Rirkrit Tiravanija created an exhibition entitled *Untitled (Free)* at 303 Gallery in New York, in which he converted a gallery into a kitchen where he served rice and Thai curry for free. His installations often take the form of stages or rooms for sharing meals, cooking, reading or playing music; so architecture or structures for living and socializing are a core element in his work. The artist invites the visitor to interact with contemporary art in a more sociable way, and blurs the distance between artist and viewer. You aren’t looking at the art, but are part of it—and are, in fact, making the art as you eat and talk with friends or new acquaintances.

² Bulloch’s beanbag works provide another instance where an artist offers a participatory role for the viewer. For *Flexible*, 1997, at Art Club Berlin she provided large, brightly colored beanbags, a CD-player and headphones so that visitors could chill out on the beanbag listening to music.

Felix González-Torres (1957-1996), who was considered within his time to be a process artist³, or the internationally well-known Danish-Icelandic artist Olafur Eliasson. Art could take place anywhere and called for togetherness, created most of the time by collectives or self-organized entities and taking everyday life as meaningful aspect of it.

In fact, the realisation that all art is dependent on society –dependent on the relationships between people and not the sole product of any one person – is becoming increasingly important in the shaping of culture (Williats 2000, 7). This characteristic of the contemporary communication-driven society seems to have a parallelism with our culture, founded as well on networks of exchange and fluidity. Moreover, the significance of the social has a strong dependency or interrelation on its particular historical time, as it gives more importance to space and presence than time and form (Larsen 2012). In that sense, Miwon Kwon argues in her critical essay *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (2002) that community-specific work is the point of departure to address the site as a ‘social’ rather than formal or phenomenological framework. As will be seen later, Kenneth A Balfelt’s caravan shares this idea of creating a creative experience through the arts that builds and extends community engagement – in that specific case, we would be talking about social inclusion. Balfelt’s project shows how creative practices can strengthen willingness for people to engage with each other and build a co-productive behaviour. Indeed, arts can open up new ways of working which impact upon social capital, the identity of a place and the society’s attachment to it.

In this context it’s relevant to mention the 2012 Berlin Biennial, curated by the artist Artur Zmijewski, author of the manifesto ‘The Applied Social Arts’ (2007). Here he encouraged artists to strive for ‘social impact’, arguing that ‘since the 1990s, art has been growing increasingly institutionalized [and] anodyne’ (Larsen 2012). However, it remains uncertain whether one can cure art following Zmijewski’s commitment for the politico-social engagement, considering that the social was a constitutive theme in the decade that, in his own analysis, turned the screw of institutionalization. At this point

³ They key feature of González-Torres installations was the process, i.e. the creative journey. Hence, process Art is concerned with the actual doing and how actions can be defined as an actual work of art.

one may question how art, and as a consequence, museums, can create constructive contributions for social and cultural development in the 21st century society. And indeed, this is a challenge that contemporary art and the educational institutions across the world are currently facing.

The social turn of contemporary art

Art is the place that produces a specific sociability; it lightens the space of relations.

- Nicolas Bourriaud (*Relational Aesthetics* 1998).

The origination of the models and conceptions that shape our culture grew out of the interdisciplinary exchanges of the 1950s and early 1960, according to some authors (Williats) or even later, around the 80's and early 90's (Larsen; Bishop).

The art historian and critic Claire Bishop discusses in her article *The Social Turn: Collaboration and its Discontents* (2006) what she terms the “social turn” in contemporary art. She analyses a chronological cycle of facts and events that have led contemporary art practices to produce projects more than static objects, the material forms of which are strongly determined by the artist's collaborators. Sticking to Bishop's argument, she presents a catalogue of projects that are just a sample of the recent surge of artistic interest in collectivity, collaboration, and direct engagement with specific social constituencies (Bishop 2006). Those are, among others: Superflex's Internet TV Station for elderly residents of a Liverpool housing project (*Tenantspin* 1999); Jeremy Deller's *Social Parade* for more than twenty social organizations in San Sebastián, Spain (2004); Jeanne van Heeswijk's project to turn a condemned shopping mall into cultural center for the residents of Vlaardingen, Rotterdam *De Strip* (2001-2004); Lucy Orta's workshops in Johannesburg to teach unemployed people new fashion skills and discuss collective solidarity *Nexus Architecture* (1995-); Pawel Althamer's sending a group of “difficult” teenagers from Warsaw's working-class Bródno district to hang out at his retrospective in Maastricht *Bad kids* (2004); or Jens Haaning's calendar of black-and-white photographic portraits of refugees in Finland awaiting the outcome of their asylum applications *The Refugee Calendar* (2002).

These kind of projects, more likely to be social events, workshops or performances, do occupy and increasingly presence in the public sector, although they do not stand out in the commercial art market. According to Claire Bishop, this shift lies on the expansion of the biennial around the world and the new model of the commissioning agency, strongly dedicated to the production of experimental engaged art in the public sphere (Bishop 2006). Moreover, Bishop connects today's artists' collaborative work, i.e., the one that fuses social reality with carefully calculated artifice, to the "Dada-Season" of 1921, a series of manifestations hosted by André Breton, Tristan Tzara or Louis Aragon, that sought to involve the Parisian public (Bishop 2006). In this manner, inter-subjective relations weren't an end in themselves but rather served to unfold a more complex knot of concerns about engagement, visibility and the conventions of social interaction (Bishop 2006).

What Bishop conceptualizes about the "social turn" is to a certain degree difficult to calibrate, in the sense that what she considers to constitute the "social" turn might be not only composed by an attendant ontological shift. Indeed, Bishop's work can be criticized as it always has the will to give a chronological sense, i.e. some historical factors that explain the emergence of a specific trend. History is not something fixed and determined, and can be determined by multiple and various factors. In any case, it is visible that there has been a progressive tendency that emphasizes contemporary art as a social project. That phenomenon carries a corresponding ethical turn in art criticism, which leads critics to concentrate on the degree to which artists question their own authorial position rather than making aesthetic (Kidner 2008). In other words, artists are academically judged by their working process, with a clear emphasis on the process over the product. Perhaps this may be justified as nowadays tendency to opposite the capitalism's predilection towards the product. Therefore, the validity of the project lies in the creative process – not in the ending object.

Socially engaged art, community-based art, participatory, interventionist or collaborative art are just some tags that refer to this new tendency of artistic practices, less interested in a relational aesthetic than in the creative rewards of collaborative activity. The belief in the empowering creativity of collective action is shared among many actual artists, such as Francis Alÿs, Pierre Huyghe, Matthew Barney or Thomas Hirschhorn and as we will see further on, Kenneth A Balfelt. Indeed, nowadays many

artists are using social situations to produce dematerialized, anti-market, politically engaged projects that pretend to blur art and life. Furthermore, participatory practices in art may be seen as way to re-humanize our fragmented capitalist society.

Lynn Froggett, *et al.*, argue, “Socially engaged practices are developed and delivered through collaboration, participation, dialogue, provocation and immersive experiences. The organisation’s focus on process and seek to embed themselves within the communities among whom they work. This puts them in a position to respond to the specific needs and agendas of communities and hence to widen audience participation” (Froggett 2011, 7). Furthermore, it appears that “socially engaged arts practices build links through temporary or permanent communities of place, interest or practice. They can contribute to personalisation by engaging with people as *social* beings rather than by producing cultural commodities for *individualised* consumers. In doing so they stimulate new forms of connectivity (Froggett *et al.*, 2011, 7). In fact, art has de capacity to change the rules of engagement in how we work and socialize together.

At this point we can agree that the transformative dimensions of socially engaged practices play an important part in promoting cultural inclusion, in reaching new audiences and in strengthening both social criticism and social bonds. Moreover, collaborative creative activity has de potential to develop connections between individuals, strength a sense of purpose or personal meaning and encourage a willingness to change things. In few words: socially engaged art engages with culture, seeks a relationship with its audience and aims to influence social strategy.

Last but not least, Swedish curator Maria Lind affirms that art is indeed used as a means for creating and recreating new relationships between people (Lind, 2004). What might be interesting is, then, the possible achievement of making dialogue a medium or the significance of dematerializing a project into a social process. In this regard we can now discuss the artistic practice of installation art: it constitutes the main form in which most of social art works/processes are presented to the audience and links with our focus of analysis: Kenneth A Balfelt’s caravan.

Installation art

Over the last few decades this rich and increasingly diverse practice has emerged in the art world and invites the public to touch, enter and experience the work, whether it is in a gallery, on city streets, or in the landscape (Bonnemaïson & Eisenbach 2009). Influenced by early site-specific sculptures, happenings and conceptual and performance art, these temporary works have been known as installations, and constitute a popular vehicle to engage art and society. According to the Tate Britain's glossary of art terms⁴, installation art is defined as a “mixed-media constructions or assemblages usually designed for a specific place and for a temporary period of time”.

Especially during the last decade, the position of the installation art in the artistic sphere has shifted from being a relatively marginal practice to have a central role in contemporary visual culture. Its presence has given birth to new heterogeneous terms that redefine the art form and it has an impact on a wide range of disciplines. At the same time, it is directly associated to the diverse nature of the contemporary experience and does so with a surprising variety of materials and practices. It is, indeed, possibly one of the forms of artistic expression that best represents contemporary life. The complexity of this practice and its close relationship with the space and the materials that shape it offer a wide expressive range and allow the public to establish a new experience with the art work.

Installation art is a broad term applied to a range of arts practices, which involves the installation or configuration of objects in a space, where the totality of objects and space comprise the artwork. Installation art tends to be more a mode of production and display of artwork rather than a movement or style. It can comprise traditional and non-traditional media, such as painting, sculpture, ready-mades, found objects, drawing or text (Moran 2010). Constructed in a wide range of locations, installations reach diverse audiences and often generate conversations about the built environment. According to the art historian Julie Reiss, there is always a reciprocal relationship of some kind between the viewer and the work, the work and the space, and the space and the viewer (1999). Indeed, the viewer's presence is an integral part of the art installation.

⁴ <http://www.tate.org.uk/learn/online-resources/glossary/i/installation-art>

Moreover, installation art requires the active engagement of the viewer with the artwork and it may involve the viewer entering into the space of the artwork and interacting with the artwork (Moran 2010). As it will be discussed further on, Kenneth A Balfelt's caravan needs to be experienced, allows the public to go inside and touch, smell and hear the music displayed. By entering into the space, the viewer encounters the artwork from multiple points of view, engaging many or all of the senses rather than just the visual or optical sense. As said before, it foregrounds experience and communication over the production of a finished art object. Installation art is also characterised by the incorporation of the site or space of display into the artwork (Moran 2010). In some cases the site of the work is a non-negotiable element and should not be modified by any instance (site-specific installations), whereas in other cases the artwork can be reassembled in other sites or spaces. That is the case of Kenneth A Balfelt's caravan, which has changed completely its spatial surroundings – from a shelter to a national art museum.

Installation art is distinguished as a genre of the late-twentieth century by a notable intensification in artists' interest in the potential for social change promoted by an emphasis on the experiential outcome of art (Bishop, 2005). In that sense the German artist Joseph Beuys (1921- 1986) was the maximum exponent of that idea, i.e. art could transform daily life (Rosenthal *et al.*, 2004). Debates around art's relationship to reality, in particular everyday socio-economic reality, lie at the heart of the preliminary indications of installation art as distinctive intentional genre, apparent in diverse collective and individual works (Moran 2010). Thus, art can also be integral to daily living, manifesting in installation art as an active mode of cultural challenge and ideological confirmation.

Many artistic practices have been considered by the academics to be the point of departure for the development of installation art: among them the practices of the Dadaists and Surrealists as well as Allan Kaprow's (1927- 2006) notion of environments, Jim Dine's (1935) use of assemblages, the performances of the Viennese Actionists⁵ and ideas incorporated in the staging of happenings⁶ and events

⁵ The Viennese Actionism was a short but radical art movement that appeared on the 1960's as one of the efforts to create action art, i. e. Fluxus, happening, performance art, body art, etc. Its main goal was the rejection to object-based art practices.

from the late 1950s (Moran 2010). Earlier works such as *Proun Room*, 1923, by the Russian artist El Lissitzky (1890- 1941) and; *Merzbau*, 1926-1936/37 by the German Kurt Schwitters (1887- 1948) appear to have a significant formative influence on what we call installation art today (Bishop 2005, 8). Claire Bishop's essay *Installation art: A Critical History*, 2005, presents primarily a history, which stresses the decades of the 60's and 70's, period when installation art was a radical form. Bishop also argues that the experience of installation art is markedly different from that of traditional art on the basis that 'instead of representing texture, space, light and so on, installation art presents these elements directly for us to experience. This introduces an emphasis on sensory immediacy' (Bishop 2005, 6). What Bishop appears to be emphasizing here is an artistic aspiration towards attaining something akin to the total immersion we experience in everyday life.

In any case, interaction, the term that defines one of the most crucial differences between fine art and new media art, becomes an even more important concept while considering installation art. It describes ways in which the longstanding goal of breaking down the barrier between the viewer and the work of art and bringing art into life can be attained (Coulter-Smith 2006, 3). Thus, the quality of the interactivity will depend upon the extent to which the work of art can encourage both critical reflection and creative engagement (Coulter-Smith 2006, 4). Moreover, and returning to the link between Kenneth A Balfelt's installation and its genre, social art, it is necessary to emphasize what we can call the social perspectives, i. e. the increasing need to blur the lines between art and society.

Social perspectives

'Social perspectives' is an ambiguous term, but the common factor in this context is an interest in the role of design and art in society and culture. It is a role that primarily relates to its inter-personal function and potential, rather than just a designed packaging of a product; i.e. a production that encompasses cultural values. In recent years, the Nordic region has revealed a tendency within art, architecture and design professionals alternating more naturally than before between professional identities (Degerman 2006, 11). Art has provided a context in which is possible to develop activities of a

⁶ A happening is an art performance, situation or event that was first coined by Allan Kaprow in the late 1950's.

more experimental, discursive and critical nature and Kenneth A Balfelt's caravan it's a perfect example of that trend.

A social perspective for an artist today means a willingness to spark some friction and challenge the system, while seeing his/her role within society and actively reflect upon and address the changes in society (Degerman 2006, 101). Artists have a privileged position but do not possess the power to alter its underlying structures on their own, and they need, indeed, help from collaborators: architects, designers, and other professionals. Kenneth A Balfelt made the caravan together with an architect and a graphic designer, combining the potential of the three fields. This kind of creative practice have the power to make culture change much easier and that is done, in part, through blurring the boundaries of social sectors, groups and hierarchies. Hence, they provide a shared emotional experience that can lead to a new way of thinking and behaving towards that social issue, i.e. in the caravan case, the social exclusion of homeless.

According to Tuomas Toivonen (Degerman 2006, 129), by claiming that the social is the next uncharted continent for the on-going expansion of the fields of architecture, design and art, we are forced to look at our work and the world from a new perspective. In fact, this new perspective reveals the effects and repercussions that surrounding information; objects and structures have on our behaviour and contemporary culture (Degerman 2006). Moreover, art, design and architecture are linked in several ways: they entail social issues relating to people's concerns, needs and intentions. In that line we should discuss how museums, the institutions par excellence that embrace artworks, could achieve a certain degree of social change.

Museums and social change

Museums and cultural institutions are currently busy developing new strategies that focus on knowledge sharing for modern's day's citizens (Lundgaard & Jensen 2013). Their aim is to ensure that museums can transform its nature to become central players in the development of cultural democracy.

The opening of the 21st century marked a large number of new ways of thinking and interacting across many fields of practice through things like social networking sites, greater attention to interdisciplinary studies and the resurgence of civic participation or democracy (Wood & Wolf, 2008). Indeed, museums are changing their role in communities, looking for more relevance and opening channels of dialogue and ways to engage with visitors (Wood & Wolf, 2008). Talking about social change in museums may appear revolutionary, as its nature is inherently conservative in its purposes of collection and preservation artefacts. Besides that aspect, there have recently been efforts to engage the public in educational endeavours that can move visitors toward greater social change (Wood 2009, 26). In the same line, Lois H. Silverman argues that today, the world's museums are embracing starkly bolder roles as agents of well-being and as vehicles for social change (Silverman 2010, 3). Moreover, museums are beginning to recognize the complex social problems and inequalities that affect people's existence and most frequently, they are responding by promoting social change through exhibits, educational programs, special events, and other efforts to raise public awareness of social issues and encourage effective action (Hein, 2005). In the case of Statens Museum for Kunst, it is unequivocal that there is an intention from the museum to provide that institution with an art work that relates visitors to a familiar social issue lived and experience in its own city, Copenhagen.

Museums have the potential to alter people's attitudes, values, knowledge and behaviour. Thus, when successful on a collective level relative to a social issue, a museum operates as an agent of social change (Silverman 2010, 19). Culture exclusion is perhaps one of the fields that museums have explored the most. Since objects constitute the raw material of museum communication, decisions about whose objects are collected and how they are displayed and interpreted become a powerful means of cultural inclusion or exclusion (Hooper-Greenhill 2000). Kenneth A Balfelt's caravan experience is challenging as it pretends to create a social impact, generate a range of positive conditions that are critical for change and encourage new capacities that lead to a shift in the way we behave among us. Accordingly, we may agree that the social work of museums involves nothing less than the making and changing culture. At the same time, the art museum establishes a connection between artwork and user by incorporating the user's own life experience.

Having reached this point, it is appropriate to examine how the use of contemporary art practices (such as Kenneth A Balfelt's caravan) and the beautification of spatial surroundings can influence the users, i.e. attempting to produce or promote a social improvement of a certain community.

Physical beautification and urban strategies

“Western society has abandoned social housing, emancipatory education and public space for the exclusive game of high profitability investments and upper-class ideology-formation, in which the beautification of run-down urban neighbourhoods plays a leading role? Or are we witnessing a revival of popular culture that will contribute to the integration of excluded groups within the social fabric?” (Moulaert *et al.* 2004, 229).

Considering Moulaert *et al.*'s words and having in mind the case of the caravan and Radical Horizontality's project, we may question what role can have culture and art. Does it help the marginalized users of the shelter and the streets of Istedgade in building up self-identities and to integrate them into the social urban fabric? Or does it end up creating an urban area produced by the aforementioned exclusive game?

Art and culture might not only be considered a luxury for the rich and wealthy, but also a creative activity for the common and the less well-off people. Since the 1990's the idea of art and culture as a form of communication has been introduced within certain circles within the urban society. This focus has brought examples of how urban developments has been open to the use of multi-dimensional strategies where the social integration is encouraged and the local identity is enhanced (Moulaert *et al.* 2004, 230). In fact, Moulaert *et al.* (2004) argue positively in proportion to supporting a strategy to break through the mechanism of social exclusion and instead create social integration within different urban areas and neighbourhoods.

Culture with a capital C in urban development

The original view on culture in urban developing projects is thought of as a scene dominated by elites. Moulaert *et al.* (2004) present the following grand examples, such as: *“The Haussmannian avenues in Paris, the Rome of the Renaissance Popes, or the*

contemporary Waterfront developments, post-modern shopping centres as architectural hypes, temples of culture Guggenheim (...)” (Moulaert *et al.* 2004, 230). These examples show very large cultural (infra)structures, which provide not only beautification and economic revivals, but they are also active in being identity-building entities (Moulaert *et al.* 2004, 230). Therefore, when the majority of the population agree on installing large cultural projects that can promote the building of a certain identity within a democratic city. Following this thought, we may consider that including the inhabitant in the urban planning and decision-making can help the urban identity-building process within local neighbourhoods.

According to Moulaert *et al.* (2004) some cultural initiatives might be more artistically, socially and economically than the Culture temples – examples mentioned above. But it is not unconditionally so: it will only work as an identity-building process if the initiative searches to protect and accommodate the existing identity or helps to build a new uniqueness that drives the neighbourhood and the community in a new direction. This shift is understood as a shift in focus, from the mainstream projects to art that is connected to the spatial context.

Moreover, and always following Moulaert *et al.* (2004) thoughts, we understand art and culture in a socially rooted perspective. To deepen in this matter, we need to consider few dimensions: *Communication, medium for participation – a planning tool*, and *the relationship between individual and collective expression* (Moulaert *et al.* 2004, 231-232). *Communication* is dealing with the challenge of creating meeting places. Getting the people who usually come across each other’s daily lives but without interacting, to meet and express them selves in a verbally way through artistic projects. *A medium for participation – a planning tool* is a tool of getting people to express their visions of the neighbourhood and city. Whereas our interest is in seeing how the users of Mændenes Hjem had the chance to express their vision of the shelter. This tool is present to give a voice to social groups with little access to mainstream participation channels. The third dimension is *the relationship between individual and collective expression*. This is a perspective of significance when planning or creating the future of people. The challenge is to understand and *use* the individual lives and experiences of people. The perspective deals with the imbalance of uneven communications skills and access to media. The aim is to put forward a more multi-dimensional

communication. Concerning the case of this paper, we see how Kenneth A. Balfelt has used his artistic approach to collect and elaborate on the wishes and dominating values of the users of Mændenes Hjem.

Recognizing that Moulaert *et al.* (2004) deals with empowerment of the fragile or marginalized people in a larger perspective – a whole neighbourhood or city, we still see the opportunity in analysing the Radical Horizontality according to this. We follow the notion of how a multi-dimensional view of neighbourhood development – where art and culture plays a significant role and creates a culturally creative attack on mainstream social integration. We recognize how Kenneth A. Balfelt is redesigning and refurbishing Mændenes Hjem to create and maintain a socially sustainable situation and development.

Following the argument of art and culture as being a society building process, Moulaert *et al.* (2004, 234) argue the potential of how contributions of art and culture can help an integration of a specific population into the urban fabric. Various ways of artistic and cultural expressions can help the empowerment of people, and lead them to (re)discover their identity and their interaction with equals. If this is the case, then we should recognize how the artistic redesign of Mændenes Hjem – created by the help of the users, enhance the idea and notion of self-identities.

The potential risk in stating art and culture in this way is the opposite notion where beautification is strongly linked to the connotation of socially destructive gentrification. Therefore, culture and art are seen as potentially destroying poor quarters and dislocating the local marginalized inhabitants (Moulaert *et al.* 2004, 234). This leads to the use of the expression of *refreshing* instead of the idea of beautification. Moulaert *et al.* (2004) express how culture as refreshing can be closer to its anthropological meaning: “*culture as mode of communication, as a ground for rediscovering social identity, as day-to-day activity in community-building, as creativity of local artists; by themselves or in co-operation with neighbourhood communities or social groups within the city*” (Moulaert *et al.* 2004, 234). In the case of Radical Horizontality and the redesign, it has to be considered as a refreshing tool rather than a beautification. Moreover, we may agree that the very valid argument could be that

Kenneth A. Balfelt uses the existing culture, among the regular users, to create a socially sustainable room for building self-identities and network.

FROM ISTEDEGADE TO SØLVGADE

Since the caravan is the main focus of analysis of this paper, it is necessary to deepen on the former and the current physical context of it. The presentation of the former context is based on online articles and pictures because of the changes that Mændenes Hjem has gone through now where the project Radical Horizontality no longer exist and the caravan is situated at Statens Museum for Kunst. The current context and use is described through online information as well as through observations, own thoughts and self-produced photographs.

The former context of the caravan

Radical Horizontality is an art project done by the artists Kenneth A. Balfelt and FOS - (Thomas Poulsen) a Danish artist, based in Copenhagen and formed at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Art. The art project was conducted with the help of the designer Charlott Karlsson, the architect Helle Gade Jensen and the interior designers Loop. The project ran from 2002-2009 and they completed a restructuring of the interior design of the café, common rooms and reception area. The goal was to refurbish Mændenes Hjem with an interior design that would call for a less hierarchal and less insecure dialog. Kenneth A. Balfelt and FOS created a place where the patient-doctor relationship was less dominating, and where there was room for the individuality and subjectivity to step forward. Before the entrance of the shelter was placed in the back, place that used to have the highest number of violent episodes. To solve that, the new entrance was placed at the corner of Istedgade and Lille Istedgade, and had a more inviting design⁷.

Kenneth A. Balfelt and FOS conducted a 9-month research to get an understanding of the users, the staff and the physical frames of Mændenes Hjem. At the same time they examined other similar institution and their values and architectural solutions. The

⁷ www.Kennethbalfelt.org/radical-horizontality/

research ended up giving them material to create a set of values, which would support the design process⁸.

The caravan was placed in the dining area in Mændenes Hjem after the refurbishing of the place. The caravan was designed and built as an ordinary caravan, used for family holidays and likewise. The function was to cause meetings to be more transparent and work with breaking down the doctor-patient barrier. Before the caravan was placed in the communal area of Mændenes Hjem, meeting between staff and counselling was situated in the basement, well hidden away. The wish of the artists was to create meetings with a less distant atmosphere and interaction between worker and user. The caravan was at the same time used for friends and strangers meeting for a cup of coffee and to have a relaxed and informal conversation⁹.

Mændenes Hjem is a shelter – a social and health professional offer for the homeless and marginalised people on the streets. They offer a place to sleep, a health department, a place for social help (*kontaktsted*) and most recent an injection room. The average number of users reaches 400-600 on a daily basis¹⁰. ”*The mission of MH is to contribute to the work, where homeless and marginalised get the opportunity to acknowledge and use their own resources in creating a good life, and contribute to a diverse society*”¹¹. Mændenes Hjem aims ’to be a home’ and have ’the perspective of the user is emphasised’. The values are ’to be professional friend to the users’, ’to create solidarity’, and ’to create focus on the development at Mændenes Hjem, where de-institutionalisation is central’¹².

Mændenes opened in 1910. In the 1960s it became institutionalised, where they started to get financial governmental support, which meant that they had the responsibility of rehabilitating the users. Drugs became a big problem during the 1970s and in the 1980s (*fattigfirserne* – the poor eighties) the amount of homeless people increased. In the middle of the 1990s they started a comprehensive urban regeneration in Vesterbro,

⁸ www.Kennethbalfelt.org/radical-horisontality/

⁹ www.Kennethbalfelt.org/radical-horisontality/

¹⁰ www.MaendenesHjem.dk/Maendenes-hjem

¹¹ Translation from Danish quote: ”*Det er Mændenes Hjems mission at bidrage til, at hjemløse og udsatte mennesker får mulighed for at erkende og anvende egne ressourcer til at realisere et godt liv og bidrage til et mangfoldigt samfund*” (www.maendenesHjem.dk/maendenes-hjem).

¹² www.MaendenesHjem.dk/mission-vision-vaerdier

which had several negative consequences for the marginalised citizens. The big change of the interior design happened in 2004 where the Radical Horizontality project was carried out. This happened in relation with the 95th anniversary of Mændenes Hjem. In 2013 they established an injection room, according to the change of the laws concerning establishing such a room in 2012¹³. The interior of Mændenes Hjem was changed when the injection room was established. The caravan got sold to Statens Museum for Kunst, and there was no remains left from Radical Horizontality.

¹³ www.MaendenesHjem.dk/et-hjem-hjemløse



Photograph no. 2

Sculpture Street of SMK & *FUCK THE DANISH AKTIVERINGS POLICE – USSR* (2004)

The current context of the caravan

FUCK THE DANISH AKTIVERINGS POLICE – USSR (2004) is the name of the artwork now that it is situated at Statens Museum for Kunst. During our research for this paper, we have not had the chance of obtaining an ‘official’ explanation for this title. As we understand the title, it is a criticism towards the existing system of rehabilitation and control over the marginalized people of the Vesterbro streets. Where this refurbishing of Mændenes Hjem that the caravan was a part of, is a renewed way of dealing with the physical frames of shelters and socially embedded initiatives. The end ‘USSR’ might be a reference to the way in which the old entrance area of Mændenes Hjem reminded the users and the workers of the old border controls of Eastern Germany. *Statens Museum for Kunst* bought the caravan when Mændenes Hjem was going through a refurbishment, this time to make space for the injection rooms. The caravan was cut up and brought to ‘Fabrikken for Kunst og Design’ *Translated*: ‘The factory for art and design’, and is now displayed from 2014 and onwards¹⁴. The caravan is now placed in the far right side of the great hall between the new and the old building in Statens Museum for Kunst. The setup for the exhibition is the caravan, a short text and a documentary video with three sets of headphones. The caravan’s interior is set up as it was in Mændenes Hjem. It has the same sitting area with flowers on the table. The computer that was used to meeting and counselling is still on one of the tables. In the drawers we found guides and directions to shelters, dentists and places with free clothing. There is constant music playing inside the caravan. The music is loud enough to fill up the caravan, without interrupting the visitors outside. The type of music is a mix between rock, hip-hop, pop and R’n’B.

The expression of the caravan in it self as an artwork might be quite simple, and has several possible interpretations. But the caravan is mere a part of the *larger* artwork. The caravan is a physical representation of the process Radical Horizontality. There is a short text in Danish and English on the wall next to the caravan. And further down the hall, a bit separated from the caravan there is to chairs, a television screen, and three sets of headphones. The video on the screen is 30 minutes long and is in Danish.

¹⁴ <http://www.smk.dk/besoeg-museet/nyheder/artikel/vi-har-faaet-en-campingvogn/>



Photograph no. 3 - The original décor of the caravan seen through a window

Photograph no. 4 - Girls and their iPads exploring the caravan



Karsten Ohrt, Statens Museum for Kunst, express how the caravan is both a part of a successful social experiment and an important part of the history of Danish art. He states that it is a challenge to bring in a piece to the museum, which was created for a different social and spatial situation. He admits that there is a difficulty for museums to handle it, so that it will make sense and fulfil its purpose¹⁵.



Photograph no. 5 – Video screen, chairs and headphones

¹⁵ <http://www.smk.dk/om-museet/presse/pressepresmeddelelser/artikel/pressemoede-fra-maendenes-hjem-til-statens-museum-for-kunst>

Visitor's motivation and learning behaviour

Many researchers have worked at describing and understanding the museum visitor experience better. However, the ways in which visitors have been typically studied, i.e. who visits de museum and why, and what visitors do and learn, may not be enough for truly understanding the visitor experience. We see that the experience of the art piece is part of the way in which the spatial surrounding defines it; therefore, we chose to observe the visitors at Statens Museum for Kunst who interacted with the caravan and the surrounding installations. We consider that the way in which visitors interact with the caravan in different spatial contexts is a part of how it is defined. The use of the caravan in the museum obviously differs from the use in Mændenes Hjem. While the former context, the décor of Mændenes Hjem, no longer exists we rely on the documented experiences and pictures.

According to John H. Falk, the museum experience cannot be adequately described by understanding the content of museums, the design of exhibitions, by defining visitors as a function of their demographics and psychographics or even by understanding visit frequency or the social arrangements in which people enter the museum (Lundgaard & Jensen, 2013, 111).

Photograph no. 6 – Visitors exploring and walking inside the caravan



John H. Falk considers these perspectives too descriptive and weak, waging for deeper and more synthetic explanation. His approach, based on interviews, led him appreciate that building and supporting personal identity was the primary driving motivation behind all museum visits (Lundgaard & Jensen, 2013, 112). That is to say that museum visits are deeply personal and they are tied to each individual's sense of identity. Furthermore, most visitors engaged in a degree of self-reflection and self-interpretation about their visit experience, i.e. individual make sense of their actions and roles by ascribing identity-related qualities or descriptions to them (Lundgaard & Jensen, 2013, 114).

Based upon his investigations, John H. Falk (Lundgaard & Jensen, 2013, 117) presents five categories of visitors:

- Explorers (visitors who are curiosity-driven with a generic interest in the content of the museum).
- Facilitators (visitors who are socially motivated, i.e. their visit enables the experience and learning of others).
- Professional/hobbyists (visitors who feel a close tie between the museum content and their profession/hobby).
- Experience seekers (visitors who are motivated to visit because they perceive the museum just as an important destination).
- Rechargers (visitors who are seeking to have a contemplative, spiritual or restorative experience).

These five identity-related reasons for visiting museums are a direct reflection of how public currently perceive the affordances of these spaces, but of course, there are other motivations and factors that influence the experience. H. Falk concludes that the closer the relationship between a visitor's perception of his/her museum experience and his/her perceived identity-related needs, the more likely the visitor will perceive that their visit was good (Lundgaard & Jensen, 2013, 122).

Explorers are perhaps the most common group of museums users: they have a certain affinity for the subject but they are not experts. These visitors enjoy wandering around the museum and discovering new (for them) objects and exhibits. This is precisely the kind of visitor we saw the most while observing our focus of analysis:

the caravan of Mændenes Hjem. During our observations we spent time in the area surrounding the caravan and the associated installations. We observed the visitors and photographed what we saw. The visitors shortly read the signs and text, and then they exploited the opportunity of being able to physically interact with an art piece. They sat down on the seats or stood in the doorway and took photographs of each other. From what we heard the visitors say, they did not understand the full extent of what the caravan was a part and symbol of. While doing our observations we did not see anyone watch the documentary video or use that part of the exhibition. This might be the reason why they expressed a certain doubt about what the caravan represented, without the need to know more. This fact underlines the statement that the visitors that experience the caravan are a type of museum guest defined as explores.

At this point we can agree that there is some kind of problem regarding the reception of the caravan by the museum visitors. In that sense, the efficiency of the message or the way the artist pretends to spread the meaning of this artwork may be, to some extent, not successful at all. It remains an open question how museums and contemporary artists can achieve a major reception with this kind of social artworks that demand a close relationship with its spatial surroundings.

Photograph no. 7 – visitors inside the caravan photographed from the back window



CONCLUSION

Reaching the last part of this article we can say that we have seen and documented how the different identities of the caravan are defined by the spatial contexts in which it is located. At first, we have presented how the caravan was a part of the redesign and refurbishing of Mændenes Hjem at Vesterbro, Copenhagen, and then how it turned into an artwork when it got sold and placed in Statens Museum for Kunst. When stating that the identity is different it is important to mention that the intention of the use is quite similar within the two different spatial contexts. The caravan demands for a use that will change the normality of the behaviour and the situation that created in it. In Mændenes Hjem, the caravan was a special kind of room for familiar meetings and informal talks. It had the intention to change the traditional idea of the private meeting, a formal encounter that tended to create a gap or a distance between the users and the caretakers at the shelter. Inside the caravan meetings were supposed to break down social barriers and create a less hierarchal relationship among that particular community. On the other hand, at Statens Museum for Kunst the caravan enables an interaction that is different from the normal way of dealing with museum objects. As many others contemporary art installations, it demands a physical interaction with it, i.e. to be touched, smelled, heard, to be experimented by all our senses.

We can conclude that there is a slight difference in how the caravan has to be *understood*, and that difference has a close connection to the spatial context where it is. In Mændenes Hjem the function of the caravan was quite straightforward, where the important perspective was the effect it created within that community and the physical opportunities it called for. The users were not encouraged to interpret or consider the deeper meaning of it. The use was based on a pattern of everyday-use and was part of the daily routines of the users and workers of the shelter. By contrast, in the National Gallery of Denmark the caravan is a part of the exhibition *FUCK THE DANISH AKTIVERINGS POLICE – USSR (2004)*, where the visitor is given an opportunity to investigate the caravan and its social functions. Thus, the caravan is part of the process of the redesign, but is also a separate and individual piece of the compiled artwork.

In addition to all said before, we have examined how the use of art and beautification of spatial surroundings influence the users, when at the same time we have explored the social practices and processes of contemporary art. We have challenged our observations and findings of the visitors at Statens Museum for Kunst through a theoretical context of the interaction with museum (art)objects. We have had in consideration the experience of the visitors, but, perhaps more important, we have seen that the changing use given to the caravan defines its identity. Furthermore, after analysing the current context of the caravan, we can state that the visitors engagement lies in the role of the explorer, i. e. visitors who are curiosity-driven with a generic interest in the content of the museum (Lundgaard & Jensen, 2013, 117). In that sense we observed how the visitors moved around the caravan, looking at and interacting with it in an exploring way.

As we understand the intentionality of this artwork, it can be classified into two main goals to achieve or functions. The first one is about understanding the complete process, while it would call for the visitor to read the signs, watch the video as much as exploring the inside of the caravan. The second one function has been mentioned above and the goal is to create a room/space where the behaviour of the visitor is changed, because of the spatial context that the caravan creates within the museum.

To end this article, we affirm that Kenneth A Balfelt's caravan presents a model for understanding spatial change and the construction of space as an active meeting-place. Thus, through emergent forms of social engagement and site-making Balfelt and many contemporary artists have redefined or challenged the very concept of "art". At the same time, we recognize the potential of linking art and social strategies, a union that can help to enhance the underlying identity, i. e. the meaning or the character, of the physical and social form of a community. As discussed before and perhaps as a product of today's pressing social issues, artists are increasingly turning to activism and community engagement. In turn, and having in mind what opened this article - the caravan's needs for reaffirmation with the sentence 'This is an artwork!'- That shift brings up an already known question: 'Is this really an artwork?'

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No. 2 - page 20: Gala Castells Puig

No. 3 - page 22: Gala Castells Puig

No. 4 - page 22: Gala Castells Puig

No. 5 - page 23: Gala Castells Puig

No. 6 - page 24: Gala Castells Puig

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