

Alexander Crilles Tønnesen

The Pavillion

The dissemination of reflective thoughts and occurrences

Bachelor's thesis in Fine Art

Supervisor: Jacob Jessen

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Introduction

During the writing of my bachelor thesis in my studio, I was interrupted by a locksmith. He of course asked me about the door he came to fix, claiming that it always worked when he was called upon to fix it. After a bit of banter back and forth, he started to ask questions around the fine art studies. He started out by asking me what I was going to be after my studies, I promptly answered him, that I am going to be an artist of course. He laughed and said there was no money in being an artist. I laughed with him and agreed while also explaining that I was not doing it for the money. Then came the followup question; How do you learn to become an artist? I stumbled on this question, laughing a bit awkwardly for myself before answering; You don't, you learn to make critical reflections around the things you are supposed to learn. If you ever think that you are done developing your artistic practise, you failed. He laughed a bit awkwardly, while also being surprised. We wished each a good day and continued on with our own.

In this reflective essay I will touch upon the critical reflections I have done during the span of my three year bachelor's degree. Focusing on the projects that relate to the development of my bachelor project *'The Pavillion'*. Proceeding in a chronological order, with the start being the first year exhibition *Kime*, continuing with a large scale public work, self coined art-theory, the second year bachelor exhibition *Syntese* and lastly the self-organised exhibition *Colliding Concepts*, before wrapping it all up in the Conclusion/Project Proposal *The Pavillion*, which will be exhibited in our final bachelor exhibition *Avgangsutstillingen'22*.

ChurchOrganMotor - The Compelling Forces of Order

You grab the door handle and feel the deep rumble coming from the other side. There is a message taped to the outside of the door that reads *“Please do enter, but close the door for the intended viewing purposes”*. As the door slowly opens, the sound floods out of the room, a mechanical white noise that is deafening but not obnoxious, reminiscent of entering a factory floor. You creep through the black molton fabric, that is blocking the last light from entering and disturbing those who had already entered. Now completely engulfed in darkness, you take a few steps forward, but the sensory deprivation of your eyesight and the overload of sound have already disorientated you. A deep voice appears over the sound and utters *‘The compelling forces of order, in the realm of the possible’* a couple of minutes pass and the voice appears again *‘On the 6th of January 2019, I dreamt I was going bald. 150 days later, I was threatened with a knife in the streets of Copenhagen’* shortly thereafter the noise cut out, and restarts as a turbine slowly whirring up until reaching the status quo from before.

This was the work I created for our 1st year exhibition *Kime* held in Gallery KiT, having the title *‘ChurchOrganMotor - The Compelling Forces of Order’*. The process leading up to the creation was a frustrating but ultimately a successful one. I started out wanting to work with sound as a catalysator (originally envisioned to rely on traffic noise) for making the audience hyperaware in the work itself, as I had already planned to be situated in the darkroom of the gallery. The initial process was orientated towards a soundscape journey, manipulating the audience to go through a banality of emotions. This however was not the outcome. Working with it for most of the process was a grind that I had not experienced before; The process felt dull and repetitive, with the main motivation being the close deadline and the learning curve of editing sound in Ableton.

Inevitably I was moving towards a dead-end in this project, even though it was almost finished (albeit not polished) the day before the opening. Luckily in the search for the last couple of soundbites to fit into this project, I stumbled upon the recording of a church organ motor turning on and the static humming noise from it that lasted 10 minutes. This soundpiece contained in itself what I had originally envisioned for the project, except for it having a more clear and almost minimalistic sound to it, wearing off relying on traffic while still keeping the energy from a motor. At this point I had a critical choice to make; finish the project that I had worked on for the last 8-9 days, or entrust myself to rely on this one audiobyte to build a new original work upon in a limited timeframe.

Needless to say, I went straight to work producing the original (alternative) soundpiece. The choice was rather easy to make; I had no interest in continuing a project that had brought me

despair, when I felt invigorated by this new audiobyte. Since the fundamental practicality of the work had the same parameters as the soundscape, which allowed me to focus on how I wanted to enrich and compliment the church organ motor. I moved towards working counterintuitively of what I did before, using personal memories to gain an effect of personality to the audio, mixed with one off sentences (coming from books such as *Against Interpretation*¹, and *Curating Subjects*²) that had caught my attention. Here they contextualised the work within the exhibition, by speaking to the relational aspect that the audience now held in the work.

This whole experience I had working with a project that I really didn't care for, until it ultimately was saved so close to the finish line by reverting back to a simple rendition of the original idea, with small but effective measures to compliment it, was a first for me. It showed me, besides the effective measures of sensory deprivation, that even in a limited timeframe, original ideas and thoughts are more substantial than forcing myself upon a work that I do not see myself in.

Gallery Blunk Mural

It was not long after the exhibition, through my continuous research of the oddities that I find in the multitude of subculture groups, which I am a part of, that I learned about dazzle camouflage. The dazzle camouflage was a ship camouflage used in world war one to protect against submarine attacks. Submarines would use their periscope to identify a ship's heading and orientation, but these elements would be obscured by the dazzle camouflage, although it was quickly rendered useless by the invention of radar. This laid the fundamentals for my proposal for a mural at the student run Gallery Blunk. The gallery itself is situated across from Dora, an old submarine pen, so the dazzle camouflage was an obvious proposal for the mural, because of the way it drew on its surroundings to compliment the local area

Working with a concrete defined proposal gave me a clear frame to work within and aim towards during the process. Having never done permanent murals beforehand, I made sure that the groundwork for the mural was done properly. Learning how to ground the wall and prime it to make the textures a coherent whole. Besides this the process was a public one, working as the weather allowed me, people would also be using their time to get some fresh air, and a lot of people take walks past the gallery. Having small talk with people about the work that I was creating was a social experience and drew a lot of attention to the gallery itself (which beforehand was hidden in plain sight). This was one of the things that I realised:

¹ Susan Sontag; *Against Interpretation* and other essays

² Paul O'Neill, Søren Andreasen; *Curating Subjects*

The gallery gained from me creating this mural besides from the mural itself, there was the publicity. Having a chat with an artist in the midst of working is a great joy and creates memories about the existence of the gallery, which translates to real value for a gallery, whose active audience normally would consist mostly of art students.

As the work progressed and I was nearing the finishing stages, I thought more about the relation between myself as an independent artist and the organisation that is Gallery Blunk. Even though I knew most of the gallery board personally beforehand, the relationship in this context was still kept professional. In hindsight I realise that I could have been more assertive on my part; Pushing for a grander unveiling event, making sure the reimbursement of material was done 100% and having a volunteer assistant from the gallery working with me throughout the whole process. These parts were also hindered by my own personal relation to Gallery Blunk, knowing that they don't have access to many resources and are struggling to pay the rent from month to month, which made me grateful on the other hand that I actually received payment for the job, even though it was mostly a symbolic amount compared to the actual hours of work.

Post-Infrastructure

Simultaneously as the work was progressing at Gallery Blunk, I was finding myself at a standstill when it came to the development of new and old ideas. My practice was evolving to contain more thematics and mediums, and I was struggling to contextualise it within my practise. Having experimented and expressed myself through sculpture, painting, sound and installations with varying degrees of success. I was subconsciously looking for a way to encapsulate what I wanted to achieve with the art I was creating, giving my work more depth and an almost pragmatic existentialist goal, while also giving a basis for further development of my own personal artistic growth. This wasn't something I was consciously working towards though, and most of my studio time in this period I spent idling, going through old works, reading a curated essay collection³ and finding other artists on social platforms (artists such as dirkkoy, stefano.bardsley and mlrroring).

As I was expanding my reference sheet through these unequal ways, it suddenly dawned on me on another dull Tuesday in October. Post-Infrastructure (of course directly meaning after infrastructure). I scribbled down a small manifest, consisting of three rules:

1. The materialisation of infrastructure that's been used for a greater good

³ Ilka Ruby, Andreas Ruby; Infrastructure Space: Including a visual atlas: Compiled by something fantastic

2. The re-use or re-purpose of disregarded/dismissed ideas and materials of infrastructure
3. The personification of services provided currently or in the past by infrastructure

How do we as humans relate to the structures (both physically and metaphysically) that we construct to further evolve and develop the society we live in, on a local, regional and global scale. Recognising the potential that it brings for artists, to create a common language to interpret societal reflections in a non-biased way.

As I was writing these rules down, it felt like the biggest revelation I had ever gone through. Seemingly coming out of nowhere, giving me the push I needed, but this wasn't true though. It was an inevitable demystification that arose from the continuous research I had been doing. The rules themselves, even though unambiguous in form, remain open to interpretation. Capturing the essence of what I had been working with beforehand and combining them in a common narrative. This created a dogma for future projects, giving me an opportunity to have a set frame to work from.

Interconnection between you & me, you & them, me & them, us & them and us and the room.

The first project where Post-Infrastructure was consciously realised for the 2nd year bachelor show *Syntese*, held at Trondhjems Kunstforening. Here I exhibited the work '*Interconnection between you & me, you & them, me & them, us & them and us and the room*', an installation spanning the whole exhibition. Comprised of 70 steel humanoid shapes that were scavenged locally, originally functioning as a form of steel ties for holding steel mesh together. They were placed in pairs of two balancing against each other, placed in correspondence with the works represented in the exhibition. The audience moving through the exhibition in relation to, well everything present in the gallery space, making them self-aware on how one moves through an exhibition space.

This version was the natural conclusion of a longer process. Starting out by choosing to reinforce the humanesque character of the objects, making a prototype where i casted concrete feet on it, making it able to stand by itself. This seemed as an obvious first move to engage with them in a materialistic process, personifying the already present character they contained. Even though the craftsmanship of the casting was in itself well done, the sculptural identity of the work seemed to become a parody of itself. Looking more like a mobster, who was about to get thrown in the sea, than actually complimenting the originality of the material.

Having an opportunity to use the academy's gallery space, in extension of the exhibiting and curating course, I could use the material as they were, to expand, implode and explode within the gallery space. Trying roughly 10 different setups, each with different goals in mind, most of them turned out irrelevant or unsuccessful. Although as I progressed, I did see a clear tendency forming. The strength in the material was much reliant in the versatility of them; The presentness they gave to the context they were put in, both when placed in relation to the experiments of the others participating in the course and equally as important, when placed as hurdles through the exhibition. Which gave them, as previously mentioned, an interrelationship between the audience, the gallery space and the objects themselves.

I took these experiments with me, as I prepared for the *Syntese* exhibition. I knew that I would be more confined in the space available than I had during the exhibition and curating. My plan was to let the others have their way first, and then come in late in the curating process and claim all the non-space that wasn't occupied. This way I could ensure that all of the eventual visitors would have to relate to all of the sculptures in symbiosis with the exhibition. The balance was very hard in my eyes, if I gave too much spacing, they would appear more as loose objects, and too condensed they would make the audience hyper aware of their movements within the exhibition context, and the symbiosis with the exhibition would fall apart. I was quite pleased with the balance I managed to find, and with the exhibition now open to the public, I realised that this process had given me an understanding of how audiences move, think and feel through an exhibition. As well as the repercussions it can have for the materials to engage in a materialistic approach.

Colliding Concepts

Since Gustaf-Emanuel Berglund and I started sharing our studio space, we quickly recognized the potential for an eventual collision in our practices, and we agreed to plan for a self-organised exhibition. The observations made earlier around how the audience experiences an exhibition intrigued me further. What is the formalia around the exhibition that lays the foundation for the audience observations, and what happens when the parameters of the exhibition are manipulated? As a self-fulfilling prophecy the central question that filled our collective thought was; What does the act of colliding contain? What happens when you interpret the collision in the moment it was happening? We agreed upon the title '*Colliding concepts*' and using the academy's Gallery KiT for the exhibition.

From the beginning of the process we discussed all of the different elements of the exhibition. A continuous cycle of debating, discussing, agreeing, disagreeing and starting over

again. The few things we agreed on, we went all in on. We knew the exhibition would be about us and our art practices. The poster reflected that egocentric mentality, showing a full body shot of us back to back, putting in question what actually was on display, us or the art, and in extension we also coordinated our outfits for the opening, showcasing ourselves as the artists of the exhibition.

The works in general made use of a self-referential discourse. An excerpt of our discussions physically manifested itself in the exhibition in the form of *'window conversations'*, a fifteen minute audiopiece placed in the smaller window gallery KiT-X, that we incorporated into our use. Placing the audience as sculptures for bypassers to observe on the highly trafficked road outside and vice versa, letting the audience watch the road as a backdrop to the audio.

This work, which was joint work, and together with my own work *'Three bridges and a bus stop'*. blurred the lines of how far the exhibition reached outside of its defined window borders. A three way split projected video installation, showing a train passing over a bridge, seamlessly going back and forth, the projection placed on a 90 degree angle from a window situated next to a bus stop, incorporating the bus stop into the installation, allowing it to be observable from the outside and inside again. Making the people waiting for the bus an active element of the exhibition, both as a performer and as the audience.

The folder was another great formalia of the exhibition we used to subvert the expectations of the audience. Making a map of the gallery layout on the central wall of the gallery, with a red dot signifying "*you are here*". All work texts and titles placed at the given location that they were in, printed on transparent paper. The map itself was not represented as a work on the map, but working as a performative element. Forcing the audience to continuously return to the map for information about the works.

Closely placed was the work *'How was I supposed to know?'* a ladder curving from the ground up and around a corner connecting to the non visible part of an air duct. Leading the audience's eyes to the parts not normally seen, expanding the physical parameters of the exhibition. Also accompanied by a short poetic anecdote written from the perspective of the ladder, referencing its own forsakenness, left abandoned in Solsiden (which is across the street from the gallery) and being brought up again and put into new contexts, questioning its new purpose. With the title having me as the artist questioning the legitimacy of the information from the ladder, thus *How was I supposed to know?.*

Going from expanding the physical parameters of the exhibition, *'Archetypal Light'* highlighted them instead. The work itself consisted of a simple wooden box (dimensions 120x50x50cm) with a door slightly open, letting light leak out into the room. Neatly placed

in the corner, complimenting the awkward architecture of the gallery's concrete support pillars.

Lastly, I had the work '*pompous young ones*' on show. Four small marble bases placed in a triangle with one standing in the middle. Concrete marble castings were balanced on top of the outer three marble bases, all resembling each other. In the middle a green plastic mould is balanced on the middle marble base, the same one used for casting the outer three, having a circular pattern of dots also seen in the castings. The work itself refers to its own process, a visual interpretation of the relationship between the tools used and the finished sculptural objects. Bringing the process itself into the exhibition context, through the objects represented, unlike '*Window conversations*' which used the conceptual discussions between Gustaf and I to highlight the process.

The Pavillion

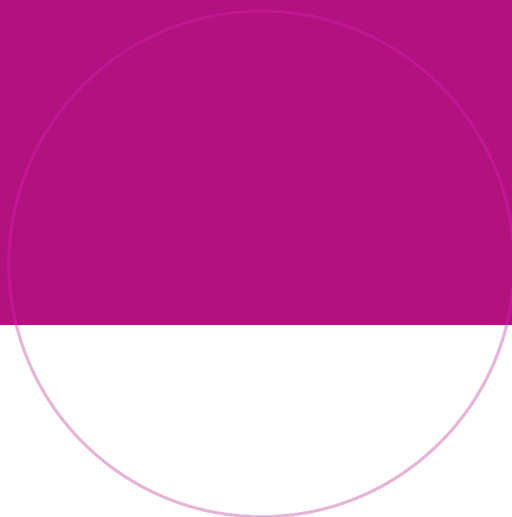
Now I stand before the last challenge of my bachelors; A project with a title reflecting what it is, *The Pavillion*. A project defined by the culmination of what I have learned during my bachelors, and being planned to be shown at our bachelor exhibition Avgangsutstillingen'22 held at Gallery KiT. So in conclusion I will account for how and why these past projects have had a defining importance for this project, I'll set forth the project proposal *The Pavillion*.

The Pavillion will be functioning as a exhibition space running in parallel to Avgangsutstillingen'22. Pavilions have long served as critical exhibition spaces throughout history at art fairs, biennials, triennials etc.. while in normative contexts serving as glorified gazebos, to seek shelter from rain. The plan is to construct *The Pavillion* out of materials found in the neglected storage room of the gallery, multiple years of construction materials left abandoned. This relates to the first two rules of Post-Infrastructure; Repurposing and materialising the past critical infrastructure of the exhibitions that were before. Also expanding the understanding of the physical parameters of an exhibition space, using self-referential materials to create a clear narrative. The practical construction work of *The Pavillion* is planned to commence two weeks before the exhibition opening. Keeping a condensed time frame without pre-defined sketches, relying only on the originality of the idea, will work as a motivator for intensity throughout the building process.

The only conditions that are being planned beforehand are which artists I am planning to invite to participate in the exhibition. I am planning to invite twelve artists to join, one for each day that the exhibition is open. The hope is that most invited artists will join, but also knowing that I am now the organisational structure around *The Pavillion*, I will try to help and accommodate the artists in being successful within the criterion of the exhibition. Not

serving as a typical exhibition space, the artists will be invited to exhibit for one day only. Furthermore, since there isn't a possibility of transporting works to and from Trondheim, and no room for installation in between exhibition days, I will be asking the artists to provide only digital copies of works. The artists themselves have free choice of what works they want shown, but I am retaining the rights to the curation of the works

I am looking forward immensely to the end of the bachelor's degree standing at a point of clarity in my artistic practice that I have rarely felt before. Not the start of the end, but the end to a start.



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