

schhh...

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Sveriges Allmänna Konstförening
c/o Konstakademien
Fredsgatan 12, Stockholm



**...texts about the
exhibition and the
work of Ann Rosén**

schhh...

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Introduction

Ann Rosén

Translated by Alison Gerber

To satisfy my own curiosity, and to offer visitors different entrances to my work, I asked three persons with whom I have worked in different contexts to write a text about my work.

I asked Anders Alpsten, with whom I realised the Port project, to write from a social point of view. For a musical perspective, I turned to Bennett Hogg, who was one of the musicians and composers that I started to work with in 1990 in Norwich, England. I asked Gunnel Pettersson to talk about the way that my work looks through video-glasses; I have worked with Gunnel at Fylkingen and on other projects.

I promised the writers that they didn't have to write a regular catalogue text. They didn't have to describe what was to be in the exhibition; that I would do myself.

Since the moment Richard Sangwill (speaking on behalf of Sveriges Allmänna Konstförening) asked me if I wanted to exhibit in Konstakademien, I was absolutely convinced that the exhibition would contain sounds. I knew that Tyst ljudskulptur (Silent Sound Sculpture) and Träffas (Meeting), two projects I have worked with for the last five years, would be the frame from which to create the exhibition.

Early in the process Richard said that the exhibition needed a title, and that the sooner he could get one the better. What do you call something that you haven't done yet? Something whose contents are still unknown? Since a title can direct the work, it was important for me to go for something that would work ten months later. I went for Schhh..., a title that represents a sound and that can mean different things in different contexts – "schhh" can mean "be quiet" or "listen," for example – and that can be understood all over the world.



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Schhh...

Schhh... is also the title of one of the sound installations in the exhibition. The work has developed from an idea that I got when Sten-Olof Hellström and I worked with the project Meeting 1983-2003. Schhh... is a "walk-in composition," a piece of sound art that one walks into. The software program that directs the sounds is affected by the movements of the visitors.

Rumsliga tystnader (Spatial silences) is the other walk-in composition that I am showing in the exhibition, and it is a work that Sten-Olof and I have developed together. Rumsliga tystnader is based on the knowledge and the experiences from the project Tyst ljudskulptur (Silent Sound Sculpture) and has been realised thanks to generous support from Konstnärsnämnden, Sveriges Bildkonstnärsfond. The work consists of sounds and countersounds that generate silent zones which are moved around in the room.

The first thing that meets the visitor in the exhibition is Ställföreträdande tystnad (Deputy silence), with the video work 5'15". The sound piece 5'15" is performed daily as an introduction to the lunch events at Plats schhh... (Site schhh...)

In Plats schhh... I want to create a meeting point, some action. A room filled with meetings, thoughts, and ideas; where artworks, sketches, images, sounds, and texts are mixed with programme items, lectures, concerts, performance, dance, showings, seminars and workshops. To create conditions for collaboration and participation has for a long time been a part of my artistic practice. I want to open up, and invite everyone for conversation!

Plats schhh... is a meeting point and a platform for collaboration where artists, musicians, composers, dancers, researchers, psychologists, architects and others meet the visitors.

Jonas Broberg, Peter Bryngelsson, Rolf Enström, Anna Eriksson, Katarina Eriksson, Hanna Hartman, Sten-Olof Hellström, Bennett Hogg, Susanne Höglin, The Instant Group, Sven Johansson, Arijana Kajfes, Erik Mikael Karlsson, Martin Küchen, Jan Liljekvist, My little pop group, Nordic Dumplings, Lise-Lotte Norelius, Sally Jane Norman, Anne Pajunen, Åke Pamrud, Ingo Reulecke, Jonas Runberger, Susanna Sandström, Peter Santesson, David Stackenäs, Jenny Sunesson, Paulina Sundin, Simon Vincent, Elisabeth Wärmfeldt and others will participate.

Plats schhh... will have lunch, afternoon and evening programmes and has been co-coordinated by myself, Sveriges Allmänna Konstförening, Fylkingen, EMS/Rikskonserter, ADRA-Art Driven Research Association, and the participants.

For a program in detail, see www.annrosen.nu

I have, in most cases, a need for substantial space for each of my productions. Since I want to show more than three works in the exhibition, I have created a number of soundworks, drafts, and sketches for new "walk-in compositions" and mini surround systems in buckets that are hanging from the wall. Visitors are welcome to take the buckets down and place them over their head.

My hope is that this exhibition and the program, based on my artistic work from 2000 to 2005, can contribute to the development of discussions between different groups, actors from different fields of interest. I hope that the exhibition can become a meeting point and create opportunities for a dialogue to begin.



Mini surround system in a bucket 2005

schhh...

Meetings, Spaces, Desires: Some personal reflections on the work of Ann Rosén.

Bennett Hogg

University of Newcastle upon Tyne, UK

These days it is commonly accepted that when we talk about works of art we are not necessarily trying to uncover "the hidden meaning" or to arrive at "the truth" of the art-work, but rather that we actively construct meanings for ourselves - meanings that arise from the encounter between our own personal histories, preferences, and interests and the art-work. We also tend to acknowledge that the situation and circumstances through which we encounter the work, and the various forms of social and cultural mediation that come into play wherever and whenever such encounters take place is also a factor in the construction of meaning. When talking about the work of an artist such as Ann Rosen, whose practice has involved the social encounter with art - and on some occasions the social encounter as art - it is thus particularly important to acknowledge that meanings are inescapably socially constructed; they are arrived at through a dialogic process. The very social principles that are included in the art-process push us towards negotiated, and therefore potentially different, meanings; we cannot be concerned with the uncovering of meanings "immanent" to the work, discovering those that may have been placed there by the artist. Whilst I was researching the information for this essay I talked extensively with Ann Rosén, and during one of our long discussions she said, in relation to her video-work *A and B* (an element in one of her first *Träffas* (*Meeting*) projects at Gävle Konstcentrum in 2001)¹ -

- "But when I was doing the exhibition I wasn't aware of this - I just realise all this talking to you now!"

Nothing, I think, could illustrate more clearly, or more openly, the essentially dialogic nature of her work. Ann makes art in order to bring people together, to establish interactions between them - and to make them search, inside themselves as much as in the art-works. It is primarily through social interactions that meanings and sense can emerge.

What follows, then, is a very personal reading of my responses to Ann's work of the past fifteen years; there are some connections that I have made to strands of conceptual thinking in our culture; there are moments where elements of her work have resonated with my own experiences; ultimately I am led to try to share my



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understanding of how art such as Ann's can form a focal point around which our desires (and our uncertainties about our desires) can collect, allowing us to work through them. Many artists ask questions, but Ann also provides the invitations to meet, and the spaces in which meetings can take place, that can open the way for these questions to be developed, even if, like desire, there is never end to them. During another discussion of her work in January 2005 she mentioned that -

- "I think what I want to make is a space where people can stop and think - space for me is not "dead space" but somewhere where something can happen - somewhere to be challenged, to think differently, to find something out."

Meetings and Spaces

Bringing people together to meet one another is one of the most frequently recurring themes in Ann Rosen's work since 1990. Starting with *Stuck in the Mud* (Norwich, UK, 1990), a performance work for dancers and improvising musicians, Ann has devised and promoted events and situations over the past fifteen years that bring people together. This is a theme that has appeared in works as diverse as *News Memory*, the breakfast actions *Frukost* in Rågsved, *Spela Kula* which involved playing games of marbles in the suburbs of Stockholm, and a series of three projects based around the idea of meetings - *Har vi träffats?* (Gävle, 2001), *Träffas* (Stockholm, 2002) and *Träffas 1983-2003* (Nacka, 2003), a theme which continues to play a significant role in her recent works *Tyst Ljudskulptur* (*Silent Sound Sculpture*) and *Rumsliga Tystnader* (*Silent Sound Spaces*). These various works bring people together to experience the art-work, even if what they are expected to do once they are together is not always made explicit. In fact, this ambiguity is part of the whole point of the meetings.

A second theme in her work is space, but this is not a one-dimensional concept. Space, for Ann, might be the physical space inside of which a meeting might be possible, a room or a portacabin (*Byggbod*, 1998), for example, or even just somewhere to sit down (the large red cushions laid outside in her work *Rastplats*, 1995). It could also be a conceptual space (what Ann often calls a "platform") that sets up the expectations that something is going to happen, or it could be the empty spaces that are delimited by a circle of loudspeakers (for example *D-dist* of 2003), the trajectory of a glass marble rolling around in circles (*Träffas*, ID:I Galleri, 2002), or the cylindrical mask worn by a dancer onto which silent video images are projected (*Ifrån*, 2000). Empty space, on the one hand, and meetings of people on the other might seem, on the surface of things at least, to be opposites, but for me they are linked together as manifestations of two key themes of much psychoanalytical thinking of the past century.

Our socio-cultural milieu is perhaps the greatest determinant of our individual subjectivities, in terms of our relationships to the members of our families and to the wider network of individuals who constitute our society. In our world language and other forms of symbolic communication (such as music or religious behaviours) structure and direct our ideas and actions. With great insight the French psychoanalyst and thinker Jacques Lacan pointed out that none of us ever really speak our own language - the language that we speak exists before we do, the symbolic systems that determine social position, gender, even something as personal as our "own" names, are decided in advance of our individual existence. In light of this the almost paranoid insistence of an autonomous "art pour l'art" can be read as a reactionary denial of the anxiety



Project Rumsliga tystnader Nacka februari 2005

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that Lacan's observation reveals, whereas the work of someone like Ann actively encounters and accepts that this is how things are, and then gets on with interrogating this state of affairs. Neither despairing about, nor trying to avoid the implications that it is we who must bring meaning to our lives and work, Ann sets the stage - in her own terms "builds a platform" - for us to meet, ask questions and think. She makes "a space where something can happen".

But the theme of space is not a single concept in her work. As I suggested above space - or maybe it is better to say spaces - appear in several different, but interconnected, forms. As I have introduced Jacques Lacan already, maybe it is interesting to bring another of his ideas into the picture. In any case it is relevant to my response to, and my reading of, Ann's work.

Space and absence

A space can be "somewhere" - where "something" can happen - but it can also be an absence, there can be a space because something is missing. This is a strong theme in Ann's concept of space, and it is one of the things that drives my own interest in her work. If, for example, I omit a word from a sentence, and I leave a blank space instead, it creates a very profound effect. To take one of Ann's own sentences from the quotation above -

- "I think what I want to - - - - is a space where people can stop and think".

One reader might look at the rest of the sentence and attempt to guess the missing word, and they may decide that this word is "find"

- "I think that what I want to find is a space where people can stop and think".

This would be a perfectly acceptable sentence, and could well ring true with the reader's experience of Ann's work. However, another reader, perhaps one who had been confused or annoyed by her work might believe that the missing word should be "avoid"

"What I want to avoid is a space where people can stop and think."

Two very different responses to a space, to "something missing", neither of which are in actual fact the "correct" missing word, but both can bring meaning to the sentence, and both of which provide opportunity for an encounter between the two readers as they argue for one reading or the other - the space caused by the missing word stimulates and gives sense to a meeting of persons which might otherwise never have happened.

This understanding of space I connect to another, more specifically Lacanian idea, because in Ann's work the image of something circling around a space also occurs regularly - as I noted above the sound of a glass marble rolling around, installations where loudspeakers move sounds and energies around an otherwise empty space, an empty bucket with a built-in microphone in which to collect sounds - circles and circular motions of various sorts appear in much of her work.

For Lacan "loss" is one of the foundational experiences in the formation of our subjectivity. It is loss, of the



Ställföretredande tystnad ID:! galleri Stockholm 2004

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maternal body, that contributes to our eventual constituting of ourselves as individual subjects. Originally, as new-born babies, we are totally dependent upon our mothers (or their equivalents) for survival, we cannot feed ourselves and cannot control our movements. At this stage, so Lacan (and others) believes, we are not aware that we are different from our mothers' bodies. When we do differentiate ourselves as individual subjects we experience a traumatic loss. This loss resonates and echoes throughout our subsequent experience, and lies at the heart of the constitution of desire.

Desire is not the same thing as need - a need (for example hunger) can be fulfilled (in the case of hunger, by food - you are hungry, you eat, you are no longer hungry). Desire, however, is structured around the sense of loss, of an absence, a lack of something, founded in Lacan's specific understanding of the situation upon the original traumatic loss of maternal plenitude.

Because we can never again regain this innocent plenitude desire is, by definition, that longing for something that can never be fulfilled. Unlike a somatic need, desire is not driven by the urge to satisfy, but by the urge to have more desire. The aim of desire, according to Lacan, is to continue to desire, to desire desiring! He illustrates this graphically with the image that desire is something which goes out from us, towards one of the several absent objects of desire which it can never reach. It circles around the empty space from which the object of desire is missing, circling ever closer but never ever able to hit that object, eventually to return to its source unfulfilled and seeking to desire again and again.

I am, for the sake of brevity, drastically oversimplifying what is in fact an extremely complex and difficult theoretical discourse, but this image of circulating desire always springs into my mind whenever I think of Ann's sound works. I could be easily accused of reading "too much" into the work, but that is exactly the point. The sound of a single marble rolling around an empty space (which forms an element in her second *Träffas* project of 2002) strongly reminds me of Lacan's conceptualisation of our desire; the marble seems to be circling something, but we cannot ever see or feel what it is that it is moving around, and this invisibility, this intangibility is, for me, a source of something that approaches what desire feels like. I want to know what is in the centre around which the marble is rolling, but I cannot know it. It feels as though something is there, but I cannot ever know what it is. The mystery and longing to know which the piece makes me experience can really recreate, at an abstracted level, that feeling of desire. In her more recent *Tyst ljudskulptur* silences assume the role of spaces, of places where something (in this case sound) is missing, and we, as participants in her work, are invited to search for them - but more on that later.

This theme of an absent centre, a space to be filled, recurs throughout Ann's work. The very first works of hers which I saw were the empty circles and crosses made from plaster, which were laid out on a beach in Norfolk, and which were subsequently included in her first British exhibition in the tiny *Contact Gallery* on Norwich's St. Benedict's Street in 1990. The circles speak for themselves as obvious "holes", and yet the crosses also delineate their own sort of absence, an intersection of space where actually, there is nothing. Any meaning that there is in these objects is whatever meaning the viewer brings to them, and as I have explained above this idea lies behind all of her meeting project. One of the key ways that Ann mediates her meetings is through game playing. The crosses and circles of her first UK exhibition also work as sculptural



D-Dist Nacka konsthall 2003 <http://www.annrosen.nu/hv/traffas/traffas.html>

Noughts and Crosses, and in fact they were used in this way in a live action that took place on a Norfolk beach with Ann and the musician Simon Vincent in 1990. Even in a gallery space, though, they immediately evoke game playing, and perhaps also distant memories of playing such a game as a small child.

Memory

Memory is, of course, the third strand in her work - and perhaps it is an inevitable theme in the work of any artist who, like Ann, uses recording technologies. Sticking with the psychoanalytical paradigms introduced earlier, we might note that Sigmund Freud, in the early twentieth century, saw phonographic recording as an extension of memory, and throughout the past century cinema, photography and sound recordings have come to occupy something like a concretisation of memory, a vast and polymorphous prosthesis of memory and recollection.

If Ann uses games to bring people together to occupy otherwise empty spaces, these empty spaces still also stand for intangible absence, for loss. Memory, as something which reminds us of what is past also implicates loss and absence - and behind all of this, behind memory, lack - and even behind the motivations that drive us to play games together - there lies desire; always driving us together, but never able to be completely fulfilled; always, at the end of the day, revealing something that is missing, that unattainable satisfaction which would stop us from desiring ever again; a sense of absence that drives us to sustain desire. In Ann's work this brings us together again and again, to keep looking, to keep listening, puzzled by what we should do, watching our desire circulate around an absence.

One of the earliest manifestations of the theme of games and memory was with the project *News Memory* during 1993-4. The motivation for this project was very simple, a way to meet new people who might be interesting to get to know. Ann drew up a list of people who she would be interested to meet and invited them to send some "news". The idea of a game hadn't formed at the earliest stages of this process, and so it was the idea of contact that was her primary concern. Bringing people together led to the idea of staging a game, but Ann refused to issue rules or even any sort of instructions, preferring to let individuals meet, with their "news" and other stimuli which Ann provided, and allow some sort of a game to emerge. The work, then, was a space and the idea of bringing people together to play, a space where "something" could happen, a game with no rules, other than those the players make as they interact with the items and with themselves.

Ann says of this work that it actually turned out to be something of a dead-end, although it achieved its own goals at the time. The themes of memory, meeting and an empty space re-emerge, though, in a transformed way in the series of works, installations and exhibitions which Ann began to develop in 2001 in Gävle, the town where she first studied art some twenty years earlier. As well as placing posters around the town inviting anyone she may have met or known from that time to get in contact she created a video work exploring a specific memory from that time, which over the years had acquired various personal associations. This was the bicycle she bought as a student, its place in her personal memory connected with other significant bicycles in her life since; she met her current partner Sten-Olof Hellström for the first time on a cycling holiday in 1983 with her son Stafan, (who would himself become a semi-professional cyclist in Belgium some years later).



Tyst ljudskulptur 2001-2003 <http://cid.mada.kth.se/tystljud>

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The piece is called *A and B*, and consists of two video recordings of a cycle journey down a single street in Gävle, one camera facing forward and one backwards. The video cuts periodically from one view to the other, one direction rendered in red the other in green. The effect is beautiful and very slightly disorienting, but what most affected me when watching it was the sense of being very much in the "here-and-now", right in the instant between the past (the rear view of where the cyclist had been) and the future (where the cyclist is going). Between the past and the future where else can we be but in "the now". And yet there recurs, for me at least, the sense of an empty space at the centre of things, or at least an invisible and intangible space, which resonates a feeling in me that is very close to what desire can feel like! I cannot stop thinking about how that place where the present is most acute, where we should find ourselves in "the here-and-now", sandwiched between the past and future, is the one place we cannot see in the video, namely the place where the cyclist is - they are sitting between the two cameras, and so they are invisible to us. Watching the piece I feel a very strong sense of wanting to identify with that invisible place - perhaps I could even say that I experience something like desire, circulating around this invisible, untouchable place that I can never be in, and yet which (as I see it) the work encourages me to feel.

Real memory (the bicycle she had as a student, and the other associations of bicycles), a sort of represented memory (the rear view from the bicycle riding on the street in Gävle suggest the past) and prosthetic memory (the video recording itself) all meet in this work, and the viewer can meet all of these memories too, and can bring their memories into their personal reading.

A more concrete, and less psychoanalytically contentious meeting, though, took place at the same time with those people who had responded to Ann's advertisement asking people who had met or known her twenty years earlier to come and meet her again. For the meeting they were told that they should bring some sounds with them, sounds that had meanings for them. These sounds were included in one of Ann's first sound works, what she likes to call "walk-in compositions" which featured in the same exhibition in Gävle Konstcentrum in 2001.

In the second *Träffas (Meeting)* project Ann used computers to create another "walk-in composition" to bring together the idea of meeting and memory, as in *News Memory*, but in this case using sound alone. A bucket containing a microphone was part of the installation, and visitors were invited to put sounds into the bucket, which then became incorporated into a constantly developing sound-work. Visitors "meet" in both the "real" world of the gallery space, but also through the sounds they make. These sounds, and by implication the meeting of the people themselves, then "live on" in the "memory" of the computer programme, constantly interacting and developing as the exhibition continues.

The themes of sounds, memories, and space develop further from this series of works into the third manifestation of the "meeting" idea, the piece *D-dist*, installed as part of the project *Träffas 1983-2003* in 2003 in Nacka. Four years after they had first met cycling in 1983 Ann and Sten-Olof began seeing one another regularly, and talked about making an art-project together. However, it would take them until 2003 before they actually realised a project together.



Tyst ljudskulptur 2001-2003 <http://cid.nada.kth.se/tystljud>

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D-dist is a sound-work which is based on synthesised noise, and which essentially consists of a computer programme that generates and moves noise around an installation of loudspeakers in an empty room. It works according to a genetic algorithm which "learns" and "grows" as the piece continues. As I see it, this work retains the elements found in the other pieces mentioned so far, but in a more attenuated and abstracted form. Technically speaking "white noise" consists of all possible frequencies simultaneously, and is thus the sonic equivalent of a completely filled space, but in fact such an information overload conspires to create the effect of a kind of paradoxical emptiness - there is so much sound that what we experience is a kind of "blank" - reflected in the fact that we use the term "white noise" - with the etymological links between the French word blanc and the English "blank" - to describe this sonic plenitude. Then there is the large empty space surrounded by loudspeakers, defined as an empty space by the sheets of noise that constantly move around it. And there is still the abstracted sense of a meeting going on - the fact that the algorithm driving the work communicates with itself, learns from what has happened, and interacts without the need for any human intervention perhaps represents a sort of "degree zero" of meeting - a meeting without people, perhaps; the "idea" of a meeting.

Recent Works Involving Silence and Interactive Sound

Much of Ann's recent work has explored sound, and it is possible to construct a narrative for the development of her work over the years that leads us to realise that sound, for a variety of reasons, is an ideal medium through which the themes I have identified can be articulated. Music itself is an inherently social art, some would say that it is the most social art we have. But music - and by implication all forms of sound - is also implicated in our cultural concepts of space; the way that we think of sound as filling a space, the way that sounds can determine the different boundaries of a space (just think of the different spaces that are delimited by the concert hall, the open-air rock festival, or the headphones of a personal stereo), or the poetic idea that architectural space is like "frozen music". But sound is also always in the here-and-now - the philosopher Immanuel Kant noted how sound is constantly disappearing even as it occurs; in the exact same moment that I utter a sound, that sound has come into being and has instantly ceased to be. Sound, in this sense, inhabits exactly that conceptual space I spoke about in relation to Ann's video-work "A and B", entirely in the here-and-now and yet always beyond our grasp. It seems reasonable, then, to see her work in sound as an extension of her experiments with meetings and with spaces of one sort or another, which she has been engaged with for the past 15 years.



Tyst ljudskulptur 2001-2003 <http://cid.nada.kth.se/tystljud>

The *Silent Sound Sculpture* project uses multiple loudspeakers and computers to project silences into a space. The room is almost empty, apart from a scaffolding frame with loudspeakers attached, and the pervasive sound of simple, quiet electronic tones. The computer programme generates sound waves that are designed to physically cancel out the electronic tones, and thus to silence them. However, because of the complexity of room acoustics, this does not work perfectly, and so only in certain parts of the room does this work to its maximum effect. The result is the emergence of small silent spaces which visitors can look for (maybe we should really say listen for). Seeing a video of people encountering the *Silent Sound Sculpture* for the first time I was most struck by the very specific kinds of social interaction that looking for these silences brought about. Sometimes watching the visitors moving around the space, moving their heads up and down, and from side to side, stretching and bending in search of the silences, I had the feel-

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ing that I was watching some strange kind of dancing, dancers at a disco of silent music, perhaps. Once again spaces - in this case spaces defined by silence, by an absence of something - not only resemble the operations of desire, but serve, as in so much of Ann's work, to bring people together to meet with one another and to search for something. In the *Silent Sound Sculpture* project social interaction and the notion of absence come together once again, and I can see in the interaction some strange and distorted echo of a nightclub and dancing, surely one of the key sites of desire in our culture!

Elsewhere the sounds in a room seem to interact with us - we are aware that there is some form of interaction but it is not always completely clear exactly what the nature of that interaction is. Like the *News Memory* project of 1993-94 Ann has set up a space for us to meet, and she has put in place a game for us to play, but it is we who must decide what the rules are; we must play the game, and to do this we need to make connections with our own memories and our own experiences. We also need to observe, interpret and interact with the others who meet with us here, and perhaps most importantly we must enjoy the act of searching for something, even if it is something we can never see or touch, because to search for something intangible is very like a particular pleasure, the pleasure we take in our unfulfillable desire.

1. Examples of several of the works mentioned in this essay can be seen at <http://www.annrosen.nu/> as well as in parts of the current exhibition.

2. In the light of this, and the ideas I have presented about Lacanian concepts of desire, it is highly significant that in his system of thought the voice constitutes one of Lacan's "partial objects", what he calls an objet petit 'a', the object cause of desire.



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Art seeks cooperation and new connections On Ann Rosén's work (1995-2001) from video's perspective

Gunnel Pettersson, 2 August 2005

artist, teacher in video and new media at

Konstfack, Stockholm

Translated by Susanne Höglin and Alison Gerber

Video with a critical position

The American artist and theoretician Martha Rosler expressed her enthusiasm regarding then-new video media and the possibilities it gives artists in an introduction to video art from 1990, "Illuminated Video: An Essential Guide to Video Art," edited by Doug Hall and Sally Fifer. Rosler argued that many of the artists that were interested in television media in the early 1970s saw themselves as social critics. Their critique was directed towards groups and individuals in Western culture who were pacified by television and towards the entire streamlined industrial and technological mass media culture. This critique spread, even then, through video and television technologies - via a medium that, ironically enough, was understood by artists as boundless, as a technology that offered possibilities for an interactive and multifaceted communication. Rosler reflected over the early uses of portable video technology and found that it represented a critique of the art institution. An institution, in Western culture, that she saw as a part of society's overall structure of power.



Tyst ljudskulptur 2001-2003 <http://cid.nada.kth.se/tystljud>

Ann Rosén's work has continued to develop somewhere within the utopia that Rosler describes. A utopia that needs a critical position towards the roles and context that the artist works within. When Rosén began to use video and new media she found the possibility to interact and communicate more broadly than was possible in her earlier practice. In the beginning of the 90s she abandoned her work with sculptures produced primarily for gallery spaces. She made a deliberate shift from a more materially based art practice and from making objects to a more conceptual form; she went from the gallery to the possibilities of public spaces. In doing so, she took an active part in the development of the role of the artist.

With the work Tyst ljudskulptur (Silent Sound Sculpture), an interdisciplinary research project, Ann Rosén has developed a critique of cultural institutions' narrow fields of activity, which in large part results from a financing structure that is not particularly open to boundary-crossing projects. In the search for these boundary-crossing cooperations one can see signs of the insufficiency of the studio space and correlated traditional artists' role - a role defined by the singular genius. In Rosén's work with Tyst ljudskulptur there is, among other things, a search to discover new possibilities for cooperation and for ways that artists can initiate research work and act within a broader context than that of the art community.

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A place for video

The possibilities that Martha Rosler wrote about for artists as social critics, or artists with a critical position, have grown since the 70s and especially since the 90s. Institutions have been more open for new forms of exhibition with, for example, video and other new media, and for greater interaction with outside partners and with the public. Those who have driven this development are artists that began to work in what is now called "relational aesthetics." Ann Rosén's works *Frukost* (Breakfast), *Port* (Doorway), *Har vi träffats?* (Have we met?), and others are examples.

Assumptions regarding place are important in these works. Concepts of "place" are developed from actual places to a greater understanding of spaces as, for example, infrastructures. There is no clear border between private and public space, and Rosén's interest is in bringing one into the other. In these works there is great weight laid on a process in which the people inhabiting a place, or the public visiting it, can contribute to the final content.

The word "project" began around this time to replace the word "artwork" in certain communities. Ann Rosén speaks often of her work in the form of the project. It doesn't work for one to ask if she has any new artworks in the making, or if she's thinking of doing a new video. One speaks of how the project is progressing. It can be difficult to talk about her work in terms of material artworks when one is in the midst of a long process; these works are perhaps more like investigations where many people who will influence the outcome are involved. The artist is perhaps not herself interested in holding to a predetermined form for the outcome. It is complicated to look at an artist like Rosén's work as representative of a form as narrowly defined as video.

In the project *Port* Ann Rosén, together with Anders Alpsten and a housing corporation, invited a number of artists to work in the foyers of several apartment buildings in the Stockholm suburb of Rågsved. The artists were to involve those who lived in the buildings, and the works were hoped to be something more than a decoration in the foyer. Rosén's contribution to the project, aside from her work as the producer, was a video that was shown in the gallery of the Art Council (Konstrådet) in Stockholm, as well as a sound work and publication that presented the *Port* project. The video showed Rågsved's subway platform, projected in the gallery's window twenty-four hours a day at 1:1 scale. The suburb was present in the center. The center and the periphery switched place, and nourished each other. The video communicated a sort of summary of the different parts of the project, the invited artists' contributions, and the cooperation of the apartment dwellers.

It has taken time for exhibiting institutions to respond to the new forms that the early cultural critics and artists of the 60s and 70s began to work with. While artists' interest in using new media like video grew quickly, institutions were slow to respond. Video was often shown in a basement space with a player that was never cued to play when the occasional viewer found their way into the gallery.

An example of one space that, early on, understood the needs of developing forms of art and found itself working differently than traditional gallery and theatre spaces is Fylkingen, an artist-run space for music and media art in Stockholm. Here it has been possible to develop new work, to try out new projects in a public space, and for members to arrange events and to invite artists and composers who would otherwise never meet. Ann Rosén has arranged and presented several works in this space, among others *Din vilja min vilja*



Träffas ID:1 galleri Stockholm 2002 <http://www.annrosen.nu/iditr/trANN.html>

schhh...

(Your will my will) together with the composer Sten-Olof Hellström. This work was a performance wherein an apple pie was baked, a video with a never-ending swinging movement projected on a large pillow, and a live performance of electroacoustic music took place.

Within Fylkingen it is an obvious choice to work across boundaries with different media, with time-based forms, and in cooperation with others. The space has grown with the needs of artists working in video and new media, in contrast with many other institutions. Appropriate darkening, internet connections, sound equipment of adequate dimensions, the possibility of working live with sound and video and with a moving or sitting public are obvious needs that have been met by Fylkingen for some time. The presence of composers and musicians with their customary need to cooperate and of a public who, through music, understand how to come to time-based art help to create a stage supportive of genre-blending and cooperation.

Presence and participation in process

The use of portable video technology that Rosler commented on came into full bloom when DV (digital video) technology became available after 2000. In the 70s there was, finally, the economic and technical possibility for artists to use portable video technology in the form of the VHS recorder. Camera work became much easier and technical quality much higher when DV technology became available.

In 1996 Ann Rosén made the installation *Frukost* (Breakfast). In a number of monitors, the viewer sees sequences from the breakfast tables of families- one monitor for each family. A kitchen table correlates to each monitor, where the viewer may be seated and served porridge. The installation was shown in an empty shop front in the center of Rågsved, and the artist served breakfast. The video documentation was straightforward. The artist made a visit during a family's normal breakfast with a small DV camera and a light. The installation was held together with an austere aesthetic; the few elements were carefully chosen. The traditional Swedish porridge breakfast on a yellow checkered tablecloth met suburban Rågsved's multi-cultural breakfast habits. Before the sober presentation was possible, there has been stubborn work and perseverance on Rosén's behalf. The local government administration had to be engaged; families willing to let a stranger with a camera into the breakfast table had to cooperate. It's a balancing act to involve the community in the creative process, while maintaining the artistic integrity necessary in shaping the work.



Träffas ID: i galleri Stockholm 2002 <http://www.annrosen.nu/fiditr/trANN.html>

To Ann Rosén, meeting with people is important. She finds social relationships and a sense of belonging both in the working process and in the work's subject matter, and is often willing to explore her own experiences and memories. But if the point of reference in Rosén's work is private experience, she simultaneously opens the works to meet with a public. The daily breakfast becomes a common matter of interest and generates a sense of belonging. We all sit, every day, and have something to eat. Porridge or whatever it is.

Video with a reach into time and space

The use of video is strongly connected to the progress within the realm of sculpture, which has been explored, for example, by Rosalind Krauss in her essay "Sculpture in the expanded field" (1978).

Time-based art, such as video and audio art, affect the work's site and space and so on. The artwork's relation to time, reach into time and the length of the experience affect each spectator's sense of belonging when moving image or sound are elements of the work.

Ann Rosén begins working with video with reference to her experiences working within the field of sculp-

schhh...

ture – from producing objects in space. In one of Rosén's installations there can, for example, be physical objects inhabiting the space at the same time as a video is shown and an audio piece is performed. Each element has a relationship to the site and to the specific rooms' properties and functions. *Har vi träffats?* (Have we met?) was an exhibition at Gävle Konstcentrum with a mandate to engage the area. Rosén first did not want to accept an offer to advertise the show on backlit billboards around the city of Gävle but soon came up with the idea to use the advertisement in her piece. Instead of informing viewers about the show, the advertisement asked questions: "Have we met? Do you want to see me again?" The questions were aimed at the people Rosén had met during the years she spent in art school at Gävle. The responses to her questions became part of the final piece exhibited in the Konstcentrum. In this case Rosén uses the site and situation for her own purposes, connecting the private and public spheres. The effects of the advertisement were also an advertisement for the show. In the exhibition's installation there was an audio piece based on sounds contributed by people who had responded to the advertisement. The processed sounds, with their original meaning removed, formed a composition in the room. The pillars of the room were dressed in fabric, which dampened the acoustics and helped to connect the first exhibition space to a second space, showing two rows of trees in opposite video projections. The projections showed a central street in Gävle. A street lined with trees is shot with focus on the ground just in front of the camera. The sequence is shot with a hand held camera and the spectator identifies with the camera, which moves forward in a decisive and even pace and which has a strong presence in the image. The shot was made during a bicycle ride, with one camera attached to the front of the bicycle and the other attached to the rear package holder. We are both leaving and closing in. It's a trip which has no beginning and no end. The cloth-covered pillars, abstracted trees in this space, create a sort of stage set backing up the events in the video. The bumpy ride between the rows of trees in that way becomes more real, gets more presence. The sound becomes its own body which fills the room. The moving image and the sound together mark time, and nothing has a beginning or an end.

Video with space for the world of sounds

It can be compelling, for a visual artist, to work with sound. In working with video one has to face the fact that the medium is a carrier of both image and sound. The soundtrack can be left empty or not. One can, from the position and references of the visual artist, move relatively freely towards and within a world of sounds. From the position of the spectator or the listener, then, it can be good to be aware that sound art cannot only be interpreted by reference to sound art- just as video art rarely is interpreted through the language of tv and film. It can be interesting to use the frame of visual arts to develop a deeper understanding of audio works by visual artists. Ann Rosén has been compelled to work more and more with sound. She does so in relation to her experience from working with sculpture and space, just as in her work with moving images. The result has been freestanding audio works as well as audio works presented in combination with other media. Her work often has a relationship to the site in which it is presented, and is often produced in collaboration with composers.

One example of these collaborations is a series of videos with the collective title *Vardagssekvenser* (Everyday sequences). It consists of short episodes from a few people's everyday life. In all the sequences the camera functions simply as a recorder, a register; none of the material is dramatized. The material collected with the camera is structured according to a concept, and the person who is filmed gets to choose the situation. The sequences are filmed in one take without any explanation to where we are or any background



Träffas ID:1 galleri Stockholm 2002 <http://www.annrosen.nu/iditr/trANN.html>

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to why these people do what they do or who they are. The short everyday sequence has been taken out of its context and been passed on to a composer for further treatment. The artist has absolute trust in that the assignment is carried out as it should. There are no planned scenes, but episodes filmed straightforwardly. This is put in contrast to the composers' music with its nuanced intros and outros, and makes the image and the sound work together effectively.

Video as a facet of many

To start from a specific perspective, in this case that of video art, today means that when many artists work cross-platform one will necessarily talk of a facet of a larger whole. Ann Rosén works, just like many other artists, with video as one of many materials and points of references. To her it is not important to stick to working with video. She has no special interest in this medium. It is the concept and how it should be communicated which is important. Art for Rosén is a tool for communication and collaboration that can generate further dialogue, but there is in her work a demand for higher awareness and knowledge within her growing field of expression so that the works function as a whole. As an artist you get to be the one who sets the rules of the game, with openness and in collaboration with other professions.



Detail from the video *A and B* 2001

schhh...

Social rörlighet, social kontroll

Anders Alpsten

I

Sorry, not yet translated

I Sune Jonssons bok *Byn med det blå huset* finns en berättelse om en man som målat sitt hus blått. I en nästobebottstad i norra Östergötland skildras en social handling. Alla andra hus i byn var röda, faluröda. Männerna som bodde i det blå huset var annorlunda och han valde att visa det genom att måla sitt hus blått. Det skapade en del förvirring hos övriga bybor.

Sune Jonssons projekt var att dokumentera en utdöende livsform. En by som några decennier tidigare varit en boplatz baserad på självhushåll, på det naturen och människor kunde skapa tillsammans. En viss arbetsuppdelning var redan gjord, det fanns en mängd hantverkare i byn som kunde hjälpa andra med vissa arbetsuppgifter, men någon direkt industrialisering fanns inte i byn. Förändringen var att vissa hade börjat resa för att arbeta.

Sune Jonssons approach kanske är mer antropologisk än konstnärlig, även om Jonson är lysande både som författare och dokumentärfotograf, men ingen skulle ha kommit på tanken att kalla Jonssons projekt för ett interaktivt konstprojekt. Detta trots att han var helt beroende av att de människor som bodde i byn med det blå huset faktiskt var beredda att ställa upp.

II

När Ann Rosen gjorde sitt projekt *Frukost* i Rågsved gick hon hem till människor och deltog i deras frukostar. Hon filmade dem samtidigt som de åt frukost. Ett ganska enkelt dokumentärt förfarande kan tyckas. Det

handlar om möten i vardagsmiljöer. Men åtgärden, att begå en konstnärlig handling i den här miljön, leder till ett upprättande av socialpolitiska rum. Sune Jonsson skildrade i sin bok en utdöende livsform. Han skriver själv att han var tvungen att fundera på hur han gjorde eftersom det liv han skildrade egentligen redan var försvunnet när han skildrade det. Ann Rosen skildrade i *Frukost* hemmen i en utsatt förort. En av de fattigaste och socialt mest segregerade förorterna i Stockholm. Det är ingen miljö som är under försvinnande, men det är en miljö som i mycket liten utsträckning skildras med konstnärliga uttryckssätt som grund. Det finns en viss likhet i motiven, men det finns en skillnad i metoderna och hur man benämner vad man sysslar med.

Ann Rosen har i sina verk ofta skildrat kollektiva företeelser. Det har varit spel, nöjesparker, hem mm. På senare tid har det glidit mer åt ett individuellt håll. Kanske hänger det samman med det som Niclas Östlind skriver i *Hjämsstorm* 80/2003, det finns ett starkt subjekt i Ann Rosen konst. Utgångspunkten för de olika projekten är inte allmän utan specifik. Specifik utifrån konstnärens egen utgångspunkt. Det är konstnären som planerar och söker upp kollektiva sammanhang. Det är ett sätt att försöka beskriva hur social kon-



Detail from the video A and B 2001

schhh...

...och förändra den sociala kontrollen under den tid som den konstnärliga aktiviteten pågår.

Ett av Ann Rosens verk kallas *News Memory*. Ann Rosen bjöd in konstnärsvänner att spela ett spel, där de nyheter som speldeltagarna tog med sig var själva grunden i spelet. Dessa nyheter sattes sedan fast på speglar, när man lyfte nyheten fick man se en bild av sig själv. Det fanns inga regler i spelet utan dessa skapades och förändrades under spelets gång. Bristen på regler skapade förstås en viss förvirring i gruppen. Det normala i en spelsituation är att alla deltagare måste följa samma regler, det är därför spel kan betraktas som rättvisa. Samma regler gäller för alla, därför avgör skickligheten i själva spelet. Spelets regler förändrar också de sociala regler som gäller under den tid man spelar. Alla ägnar sig åt spelet och dess regler. När man skapar ett spel utan regler skapas två situationer utan regler: dels ett spel där ingen riktigt vet vad som ska göras, dels ett spel där ingen riktigt vet hur man ska hantera. Resultatet blev i *News Memory* att en del arbetade hårt med att försöka skapa en så normal spelsituation som möjligt, andra försökte åter-skapa en normal festsituation.

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Det här sättet att sätta två system ur spel samtidigt gör det möjligt att skapa en social situation som är något förändrad, något vriden. Det är där som själva verken uppstår, i händelsen. Man brukar säga att skönheten finns i betraktarens öga, men här finns själva verket i deltagarnas händer.

Att låta verket uppstå i stunden är en metodik som Ann Rosen ofta använder, på det sättet uppstår ett nästan dokumentärt material kring hennes verk. Den kollektiva rörelsen kring den företeelse konstnären presenterar är det som blir innehållet. Ann Rosen presenterar bara en form.

Ibland känns det konstigt att beskriva det som form, det som Ann Rosén gör, eftersom som det är innehållet som så tydligt berör i hennes verk. Men det är väl det som är det intressanta, att Rosén gör ett arrangemang för någonting som kan liknas vid ett rollspel. I de senare, mer individriktade verken, finns arrangemangssituationerna kvar. Tanken att göra ett tyst rum i ett större offentligt rum är en typisk metod för att skapa en förändring av hur man uppfattar verkligheten. *Tyst ljudskulptur* beskrivs ofta ur ett tekniskt perspektiv, eftersom det är ett tekniskt komplicerat verk som kanske aldrig blir något annat än en plan. Men ur ett upplevelseperspektiv måste det kännas som att vara döv på en offentlig plats. Det blir inte som att hålla för öronen, det blir som att isoleras ljudmässigt från omvärlden, det är kanske så det är att vara döv. På det sättet får alla en möjlighet att betrakta världen utanför ur ett bestämt perspektiv, perspektivet som innebär att man inte hör. Hur förändras världen då och hur ser världen ut när jag återvänder från tystnaden?

Skillnaden mellan individ och kollektiv, eller spelet mellan det individuella och det kollektiva, uppstår också i olika projekt som Ann Rosén genomfört. I Portprojektet stod individen - konstnären - för en förändring i kollektivets - hyresgästernas - vardag. Det uppstod ett antal krockar mellan det individuella perspektivet och det kollektiva. Tydligast blev detta i Michael von Hausswolfs verk där hyresgästerna helt enkelt talade om att den idé som han ville genomföra inte var av intresse för dem. De ville inte ha den påverkan på sin miljö.

Så kanske handlar det om påverkan. Att påverka en nära kollektiv miljö för att urskilja individerna, eftersom individen alltid är den viktigaste enskilda beståndsdel. Eller är det tvärtom, att kollektivet är den första och



Har vi träffats? Gävle 2001

schhh...

...och hur kan vi förstå den verkliga verkligheten? Vilken ordning som egentligen råder kommer vi förmodligen aldrig att få svar på, men frågeställningen är på något sätt evig.

I boken *Byn med det blå huset* skildras en kollektiv företeelse, en gammal by där människor på olika sätt är väldigt nära beroende av varandra. Men namnet på boken kommer från ett mycket individuellt ställningstagande. Det finns en man som målat sitt hus blått och som dessutom kan esperanto. En individualist som manifesterar sin egen individualitet.

För Ann Rosén finns ett behov av att manifesterar sin egen individualism genom att undersöka kollektiva händelser och miljöer. Detta sker mer och mer i form av ljud. I ett av verken på Konstakademien kommer publiken att kollektivt påverka ljudet i ett rum. Alla blir beroende av hur andra personer rör sig, inte så att de själva inte kommer att krocka, var och en kan krocka med de andras ljud. För att klara av att framställa ljud tillsammans kommer det att krävas samordning. Frågan är om någon kommer att kliva fram och bli en tillfällig ljudgeneral och skapa litet ordning i det kollektiva kaos som Ann Rosén skapat.

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III

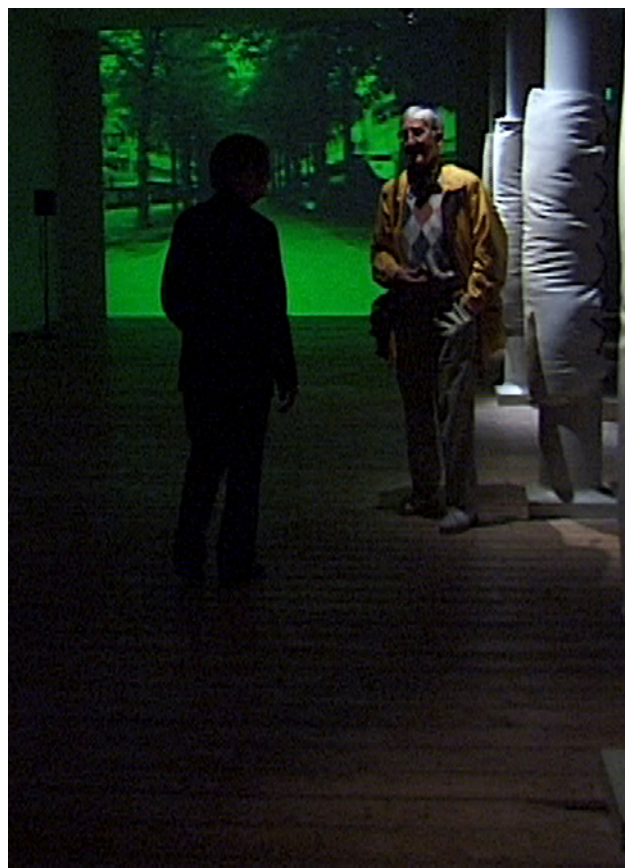
"JAG BETRAKTAR mig inte som troende, men är inte riktigt säker på varför. Kanske ger sökandet och osäkerheten en starkare smak åt livet. Jag tänker mig att jag ser och lever, inte klarare, inte bättre, men kanske utan den belastning det skulle innebära att binda mig vid en tro och dess ceremoniella och rituella strukturer. Samtidigt inser jag ju att en människa alltid är bunden vid något som är eller kan liknas vid just "ceremoniella och rituella strukturer" – i kärleken, politiken, arbetslivet, sällskapslivet, i såväl de mest privata och intima som i det offentliga – bunden vid något som är större än henne själv."

Så skriver poeten Arne Johnsson i *Hundarna i Montpelier*, en kort essä om övergångar, riter, förvandlingar.

Övergången, passagen, riten är en plats som återkommer i Ann Roséns verk, både i fysisk och mental mening. Projektet *Port* utspelade sig i portar, en övergång mellan det privata och det offentliga, *Frukost* utspelade sig i förvandlingen mellan natt och dag, *Träffas* annonserade mellan det utlämnande och det intima. Den här platsen tyck intressera Ann Rosén. Den är en del i konstnärskapets val mellan vad man lämnar ut och vad man håller inne med. Det är på just den här platsen som mötet sker, och det är mötet Ann Rosén letar efter, det visar hon tydligt i flera av sina verk.

Ann Rosén tycks ha ett behov av att definiera platsen där mötet sker. *Tyst ljudskulptur* är en plats där mötet sker i första hand med en själv. Och det är på något sätt där hon har hamnat, i mötet med sig själv. Det finns en tendens i Ann Roséns projekt som innebär att de involverar möten mellan färre människor. Kanske en skiftning från det kvantitativa till det kvalitativa, från det sociala/politiska till det personliga/privata. Det är som om Ann Rosen under 90-talet passerat ett antal transithallar där de transiterande passagerarna blir färre och färre.

Att skapa möten eller utrymmen för möten kan vid en första tanke tyckas vara en verksamhet som involverar mer än en person. Men det finns inget principiellt problem med att låta andra människor möta sig själva. Tvärtom är det väl just det en terapeut eller en meditationslärare gör. I de här mötena kan man tänka sig att det uppstår ett slags mentala förlösningar och att Ann Rosén agerar med en sokratisk teknik.



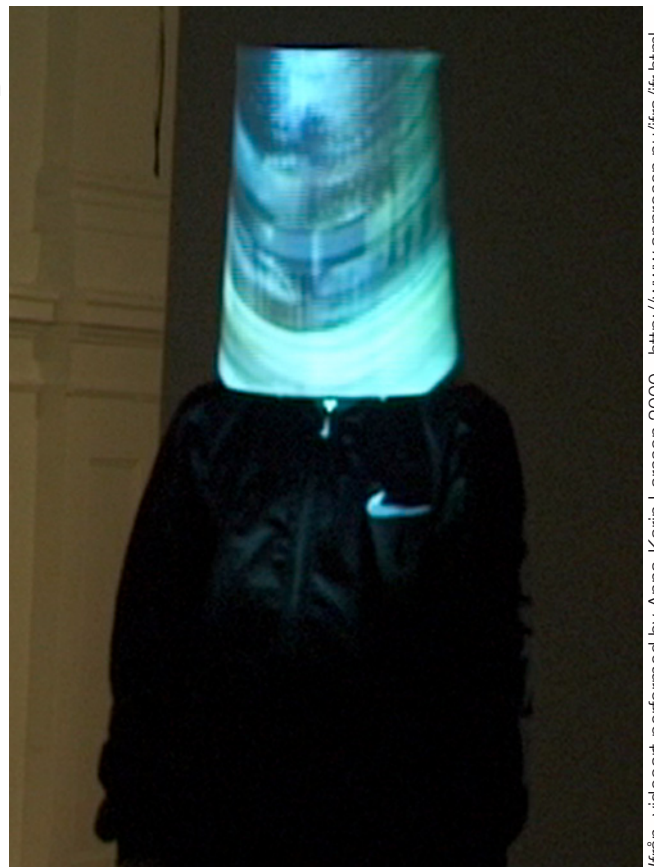
Har vi träffats? Gävle konsthall 2001 <http://www.annrosen.nu/hvt/traffas/traffas.html>

schhh...^{IV}

I samtal uttrycker Ann Rosén ofta en frustration över de system som håller fast olika delar av samhället. Det gäller i lika hög grad kulturlivet om andra delar av samhällslivet. Att lösa upp gränserna mellan konst och vetenskap är ett av de uttalade målen med *Tyst ljudskulptur*. Att genomföra ett projekt som samtidigt är konstnärligt och tekniskt komplicerat och som kräver professionell kompetens inom en rad olika områden. Det som uppstår här är nya former av möten, möten mellan människor som sysslar med saker som ofta uppfattas som oförenliga. I det här fallet tar Ann Rosén på sig en annan typ av roll än vad hon gjort i de projekt som mer bygger på slumpmässiga möten. Hon tar på sig den sociala kontrollen.

Sorry, not yet translated

I *Plats schhh...* kommer Ann Rosén åter att bjuda in ett stort antal människor för att skapa en mötesplats. I detta sammanhang ser ut som en fortsättning på *Tyst ljudskulptur*, att samla olika professionella människor på samma plats för att genomföra något som blir större än summan av delarna. Det blir en plattform, precis som föreningen ADRA blir en plattform. Och kanske är det så att satelliten som Ann Rosén skickade ut när hon kallade sig *Pleasure Garden Director* nu åter har landat i ett sammanhang där gränser kan överskridas genom olika typer av möten. Den här gången finns det en definierad plats och en definierad tid. Deltagarna är delvis bestämda, men också de som besöker *schhh...* kommer förstås att vara deltagare. Det är som det varit tidigare; Ann Rosén erbjuder en form, innehållet uppstår.



ifrån videoart performed by Anna-Karin Larsson 2000 <http://www.annrosen.nu/ifa/ifa.html>