

Preface

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Ever since it was first conceived more than sixty years ago, Moderna Museet has been the subject of countless visions, debates, successes and controversies. There have always been strong opinions on what the museum does and doesn't do. Moderna Museet has a legacy of experimenting and venturing outside the expectations of what a modern art museum is. To reflect on this legacy, and to follow in its footsteps or find new pathways, we need knowledge about the Museum's history. Over the past ten years, our research activities have intensified, leading to a number of collaborations with universities and other museums in Sweden and abroad. A bright star among my predecessors was Pontus Hultén, and his career has been the subject of many studies. This book analyses and reconsiders some of the myths about the first decade that still inform the picture of Moderna Museet in many ways. The challenges of leading and running the largest Nordic museum of modern art have obviously changed since Hultén began his work in the early 1960s and laid the foundation for the museum we know. Interestingly, however, many of the issues that Hultén and his colleagues and staff negotiated with regard to the museum of the future are just as relevant now.

Pontus Hultén's own voice resounds in various ways in the project and in this book, through an interview from 1971, in which he responds to the question of how to interest as many people as possible in a museum of contemporary art. He says that we need to have faith in artistic activity as the most subtle yet sharpest form of expression. This statement, which is inspiring in so many ways, is in line with the manifesto we have been developing since 2019, which declares that Moderna Museet shall be engaging, fight for art and be a stimulating place for people and art, in accordance with our assignment to collect, preserve, exhibit and share.

The research project *Pontus Hultén and Moderna Museet – Research and Learning Based on an Art Collection, an Archive and a Library* has been running for many years, and the results have been presented successively as texts, programmes and exhibitions. My warmest thanks go to the project team, which consisted of our internal

researchers Annika Gunnarsson, Ylva Hillström and Anna Tellgren, and the external researcher Anna Lundström. Three other researchers were invited to contribute. We would like to thank Patrik Andersson and Jimmy Pettersson for their pieces in the first book, published in 2017, and Lars Bang Larsen for his sharp analysis of *The Machine* in this second book. We are also grateful to Moderna Museet's Archive Manager, Susana Mendoza Brackenhoff, who has supported the projects in its various phases.

The brilliant graphic design of the books was devised by Karl Stefan Andersson. This series on our ongoing research is part of Teresa Hahr's endeavor to develop Moderna Museet's publishing activities in her role as Head of Publications. I also wish to especially thank Walther and Franz König for supporting us and publishing these two books through their legendary publishing house in Cologne, which has been essential for reaching an international readership. Finally, I would like to thank former and current colleagues who have shared their memories and expertise with the researchers, and who will all be inscribed in the history of Moderna Museet.