

The image is a close-up of a sculpture of a horse's head. The horse has a large, detailed eye with a brown iris and a dark pupil. The fur is rendered in shades of grey and brown. The muzzle is covered in thick, expressive splatters of paint in various colors, including green, orange, red, and yellow. The background is dark and textured.

The History Book

On Moderna Museet 1958–2008

MODERNA MUSEET Steidl

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Foreword

When you work at Moderna Museet, it can sometimes feel as though you are dealing in myths. We help to construct myths – about artists and their work, in particular – while, it is to be hoped, also deconstructing others. We put together narratives about works of art, artists, times and places, and we examine and revise them. As part of this process, myths also arise about ourselves, about what happened, who did what and why. Over the course of fifty years, a good many such stories, and in their more intense form – myths, have been created.

This book about the museum's history is an attempt by the institution to examine and re-evaluate itself to some extent. An array of Sweden's leading academic experts from the country's foremost universities are responsible for the major part of this study. Accompanying their external perspective are articles from the inside, so to speak, written by the curators of Moderna Museet. A complicating factor has been added to the mix in the guise of the intervention by the artists Marysia Lewandowska and Neil Cummings and the seductive and fascinating ideas of Britton Britton, Christina and Claes Britton and Stefan Andersson.

Before you get to grips with this both voluminous and vertiginous volume, I would simply like to thank all those who have made it possible. A cordial thank you to the

researchers and museum curators who have devoted so much time and effort to dig deep into the history of the museum. We would particularly like to thank the many members of the museum's staff who have patiently helped to locate and provide the material the authors needed for their studies. Interviews with previous and current colleagues have been of crucial importance to several of the authors in discovering information about various events. Other individuals closely connected with the museum have also been interviewed, and we would like to express our profound gratitude to all those who put their time and their knowledge at our disposal.

In essence, this book is the fruit of a research project that was initiated in 2004 and which has been able to maintain a pace of high intensity thanks to a very generous grant from Gertrude and Ivar Philipson's Foundation. Anna Tellgren, the museum's curator of photography, has served as project leader, collaborating in the last few years with Martin Sundberg. Alice Braun, Teresa Hahr and Anna Lundström also served on the project group which worked to produce the book. Thank you so much for an extraordinary piece of work. An equally warm thank you to the artists who have boldly looked ahead, into the future, and to the designers who have ensured that we can now hold an extraordinary book in our hands.

Lars Nittve, Director

Introduction

When an institution such as Moderna Museet celebrates its 50th anniversary, it prompts a look back and a historical analysis, as a starting-point for discussing the future. What sort of institution is Moderna Museet today, compared with the first few years after the opening in 1958? This book presents the results of a research project aimed at answering this and other questions. It has been fascinating to take part in this project, and to examine the many historic conditions that have influenced the museum in the 50 years that Stockholm and Sweden has had a national museum for modern art.

Moderna Museet opened on 9 May 1958. It has had eight directors: Bo Wennberg, Pontus Hultén, Philip von Schantz, Karin Bergqvist Lindegren, Olle Granath, Björn Springfieldt, David Elliott and Lars Nittve, each representing various phases for Moderna Museet. This book is an attempt to look further afield, beyond the directors, the visible or famed events in the museum's history. A fundamental aspect here is that the museum itself has taken the initiative for this historiography and reflection on the role of Moderna Museet in Swedish and international art life. In consequence, the book is not conceived as a typical "anniversary book", a chronological account from 1958 to 2008 with short anecdotes illustrated with suitable photographs. The essays in *The History Book* explore various aspects of the museum's activities. In this way, Moderna Museet exposes itself to the risk of being criticised and challenged, but the end result will hopefully be a deeper understanding of this multi-faceted institution. The project is part of Moderna Museet's long-term goal of increasing and enhancing its connections with research in its continuous operations.

We all have our own picture of Moderna Museet. Those who experienced the first years speak of the openness, the avant-garde approach and the freedom. Those who started going to the museum in the 1980s have another picture based on how the collection was presented, of meeting up in the restaurant and the outdoor concerts. Those who are young today and perhaps got to know the museum through *Zon Moderna* have yet another perception of Moderna Museet, which will be passed on in their stories to the next generation. The articles we are publishing here were generated by extensive research in archives, interviews and a review of previous research. Several of the studies are based on and discuss the previous anniversary books *Moderna Museet 1958–1983* (1983) and *Nationalmuseum 1792–1992* (1992) as well as *Moderna Museet. The Book* (2004). Nevertheless, there has been a need to look beyond the stories about the happy 1960s, the political 1970s, the classic exhibitions of the 1980s, the crises in the 1990s and the problem with mould in the new building. The museum is so much more than that. This book presents new information and new perspectives on the museum, but

it is naturally not the ultimate, all-encompassing book on Moderna Museet. While working on it, we have come across many exciting ideas and results that would have been interesting to examine more closely. We hope that *The History Book* will inspire further studies of the museum as an institution, its exhibitions, activities, buildings, collection and specific works.

A fundamental concept of the project has been to include both external and internal perspectives. Therefore, a reference group consisting of the museum curators, and a team of seven independent researchers, has been linked to the project. The reference group consisted of Annika Gunnarsson (curator, prints and drawings), Karin Malmquist (curator, education), Iris Müller-Westermann (curator, international art), Magnus af Petersens (curator, contemporary art, film and video), Anna Tellgren (curator, photography) and Cecilia Widenheim (curator, Swedish and Nordic art). The research team includes Eva Eriksson, Martin Gustavsson, Maria Görts, Anette Göthlund, Hans Hayden, Marianne Hultman and Jeff Werner. The diverse backgrounds of the participants have enriched the work process, which was based on a well-proven method, with the research seminar as a forum for exchange of ideas and information. When the thought of a project about Moderna Museet's history was first broached at our curator meetings in autumn 2004, subjects that would be interesting for further studies were formulated. External researchers whose respective research profiles had touched on the subject of the modern art museum and its history were invited to take part in the project. The book tells Moderna Museet's history in relation to a number of themes, each of which forms a chapter. This thematic approach has enabled an in-depth study of certain issues and subjects that have been especially important in the museum's 50 years of existence. It has also facilitated a chronological study and a scrutiny of goals, visions and choices from the early days of the museum up until today's activities. The reference and research group has been meeting regularly since spring 2006, for work meetings and seminars, to discuss and agree on ideas and draft proposals. These meetings have been critical for the final selection of themes and results presented in this anthology.

The research project was supervised by myself, Anna Tellgren, together with the researcher and project coordinator Martin Sundberg, who has also served as the editor of the written material. As the external copy editor, Johan Rosell has looked over the written material. The endnotes to Marianne Hultman's interview with Billy Klüver have been edited and complemented by Martin Sundberg and the project assistant, Anna Lundström. Karin Malmquist's essay on adult learning is edited and adapted by the curator John Peter Nilsson. We would like to extend our gratitude to them for their contribution. Special thanks, also, to Ann-Sofi Noring, head of Art & Learning, for giving her support to

the project from the start, and for reviewing the essays in the script phase and giving valuable feedback.

A vital source for several of the studies, and a concrete result of the research project, is the organising and digitising of the unique photo documentation of events, exhibitions and persons, which has been stored in the museum archives and is now available through the Moderna Museet database, TMS. This work has been in progress since 2004 and was carried out by the photo technician Alice Braun. In the book we have striven to select illustrations other than those that are nearly always published in connection with the museum's exhibitions and history. Claes Britton's efforts have been crucial to this selection.

Interviews with staff members who have influenced the museum were performed, giving us the opportunity to record the undocumented history. The individual interviews are presented by each respective author. Moreover, Annika Gunnarsson, Martin Gustavsson, Martin Sundberg and Anna Tellgren collectively interviewed Olle Granath on 13 June 2007, asking questions posed by several of the authors. The interviews will eventually be stored in the Moderna Museet official archives (Moderna Museets myndighetsarkiv). An edited and annotated interview with Billy Klüver is also included in the book. His contacts on the American art scene made him an invaluable partner during Moderna Museet's first years. The interview gives an insight into the early efforts and the networking, highlighting both famous and less well-known events. A great deal has been written about American 1960s art and we are not presenting any novelties here; instead, this interview serves as a commentary to the many anecdotes and stories from the time, but from a Swedish perspective. It also gives contrast to Pontus Hultén's own accounts of the early years of exhibiting and collaborating with the memories and legends as told by someone else. The interview is a document that relates events that are more extensively described in other parts of the book, but it also includes interesting ideas that could be explored and elaborated on in separate texts. Some readers may ask why there is no chapter/biography on, or interview with, Pontus Hultén. The answer is that so many interviews with Hultén and essays about him have already been published. Instead, this book reflects his work and life through the various themes that are pursued here. Thus, a more profound understanding of this legendary museum figure emerges.

Many of the regular activities of a museum are not visible to the visitors. The museum behind the scenes could also be an interesting subject for study. What the public sees, above all, when they visit the museum is the current exhibitions and the permanent collection. There are many staff categories whose work is vital to the running of the museum, but who are never seen directly by the public. For instance, the museum staff deal with lending, acquisitions, depositions, reproduction orders, recording, mounting, building and conservation. When Moderna Museet opened in 1958, there were three permanent staff members. As I write this, in April 2008, Moderna Museet has 93 permanent staff members and some 40 temporary employees. The staff work in five

departments: Art & Learning, Technology, Conservation, Communication and Administration, each led by a department head. The occupations represented in the museum today include registrars, museum hosts, art educators, museum technicians, photographers, attendants, conservators, archivists, librarians, shop staff, press officers and staff in charge of finance, personnel, booking, marketing, information, conferences, web, catalogues, security, the art database, sponsorship, IT and events. Moreover, there are several assistants and curators responsible for specific fields.

A conservation studio was set up in June 1970 in Building 104 – Skeppsholmsateljén – which was shared by Nationalmuseum and Moderna Museet. The studio had both government-employed conservators and freelancers. Lars Byström was recruited in 1982 to head the department. He had completed his studies in Denmark, which was a forerunner in the Nordic region in the field of conservation. In addition to caring for the works in the collection, the only conservator employed for Moderna Museet was also commissioned to look after all the works deposited with the museum. After it had been announced at the end of the 1980s that a new museum was to be built, the conservators were a strong influence in the planning process. One reason why a new museum building was needed was that the old extended drill-house did not fulfil international requirements on security and climate. In the new building it would be possible to have large, functional, conservation studios and modern technology. Today, the museum has seven conservators and a large section of the new building is devoted to conservation studios, carpentry workshops and storage. The technical department has also developed from one janitor who was in charge of the maintenance, guarding, mail etcetera, with additional help from relatives, friends and students with preparations etcetera. Today, the museum employs some ten museum technicians, each with their special skills in carpentry, audio-visual technology, electricity, packaging, and a few who manage the storage of certain parts of the collection. The museum has progressed from being a small museum, a public gallery, to becoming a separate government agency in 1998 and one of the larger art museums in Europe. This has naturally influenced funding, staff and audiences.

The initial chapters of this book deal with various aspects of Moderna Museet's history, looking at general issues relating to the development of the collection, the collecting and exhibition policies and the museum buildings. Next follows a section that discusses Moderna Museet in relation to its audience, and the book concludes with a section on its reception from an international perspective. This thematic structure entails that some individuals, exhibitions, events, and so on, are dealt with in several chapters. An index has been set up to facilitate reading, with the complement of a chronology, a list of catalogues and a bibliography of literature on Moderna Museet.

The first chapter, by Maria Görts, examines how Moderna Museet's collection of paintings and sculptures was created and the ambitions and choices that have impacted on the collecting. It reviews the intentions of the museum

management and the guidelines issued by the government. The collection has also been substantially enhanced by donations from private individuals and donations and acquisitions in consultation with the Friends of Moderna Museet (Moderna Museets Vänner). The emphasis of the collection is on American and French art from the 1960s and 1970s and modern classics. These choices continue to influence the daily work of the museum today. Our collection is the starting point for the museum's activities, dictating what we can lend to other museums and collections and, thus, what we can borrow.

In the subsequent chapters Martin Gustavsson looks at how the political and financial framework for Moderna Museet's activities have changed from 1958 to 2008. This is complemented by socio-historic issues relating to the audience and an analysis of the relationship between money, politics and audiences over the years. The question is how the government has used Moderna Museet. Tables and charts illustrate the results of Gustavsson's comprehensive study of the official archives of Nationalmuseum and Moderna Museet for data on costs for premises and staff, annual reports, financial resources, fees and contributions.

Eva Eriksson writes about Moderna Museets different architectonic guises over fifty years, from the refurbishment of the former navy drill-house on Skeppsholmen, via Per Olof Olsson's extension built in the 1970s, to the competition and the current museum building from 1998, designed by Rafael Moneo. The study reveals how each architectural change has, in fact, concerned the museum's basic activities and the role of culture in society. The parties concerned in the debate include the museum management, politicians, funding government bodies, artists, critics and an interested general public.

The stories behind the development of Moderna Museet's collection of film, photography, drawings and prints pose many questions about collecting, art and politics. This is the subject of the three ensuing chapters. Moderna Museet's collection of films dates back to the museum's early days as a forum for happenings, dance, music, drama and film events, and this is explored by Magnus af Petersens and Martin Sundberg. Today, Stockholm has numerous separate venues for all these genres, but the expectations on Moderna Museet are still based on memories of the 1960s, and the reasons for this are tracked down in their essay.

Anna Tellgren writes about the role of photography at Moderna Museet, starting with the Museum of Photography (Fotografiska Museet), which was launched as a separate department in 1971. It existed until 1998, when it was reorganised, moved into the new building and its photography collection was integrated with Moderna Museet. Alongside the changes in the museum's organisation and facilities, the evolution of postmodernist photography also generated new ideas on exhibitions and acquisitions.

Annika Gunnarsson accounts for how and why some 30,000 works of modern and contemporary prints and drawings were relocated from Nationalmuseum to Moderna Museet in the late 1990s. This event has a previous history that goes back to the 1940s and the discussions on what a

modern museum should contain, and the essay highlights the perspectives of a few key figures and how they influenced the course of events.

In his essay, Hans Hayden examines a variety of indefinable exhibitions on the relationship between the present and the past. He identifies a number of exhibitions of this kind among those held at Moderna Museet, focusing on *Movement in Art (Rörelse i konsten)*, 1961, *The Inner and the Outer Space (Den inre och den yttre rymden)*, 1965, *Implosion – A Postmodern Perspective* (1987) and *Wounds: Between Democracy and Redemption in Contemporary Art* (1998), and, to a lesser extent, *Ararat* (1976) and *Vanishing Points (Flyktpunkter)*, 1984). In these exhibitions, Hayden claims, a more ambiguous time perspective is defined, each demonstrating a more or less distinct prophetic trait, where the formulation of contemporaneity bears within it a vision of a possible future. The museum as an institution is thus a place that is not merely a physical, but also an imaginary space, built from notions and ideas.

This is followed by Marianne Hultman's interview, mentioned above, with Billy Klüver, carried out in 1997 in his home outside New York.

Anette Göthlund's essay concerns Moderna Museet's educational ambitions for children and youths. She chronicles the museum's activities in art education from the famous exhibitions *The Model* and *Ararat*, through the establishment of the Workshop, to the *Zon Moderna* project.

Karin Malmquist presents a few examples of what could be defined as adult education at Moderna Museet, identifying various development phases, from the experiments in the early years, the conventional guided tours, the absence of art education and, finally, the more conscious, ambitious educational projects in the museum's more recent history. Both these chapters study and expand on Carlo Derkert's role as an educator. He has often been described as a legend and has had many opportunities to present his view on these issues. This makes it all the more interesting to hear the voices of other individuals who were also involved in developing the educational activities at the museum.

Martin Sundberg writes about the aesthetics of the exhibition catalogue and its role in the activities – the catalogue is often all that remains after an exhibition is dismantled. Moderna Museet has published several hundred numbered exhibition catalogues and a large number of unnumbered publications. They differ in terms of visual design and the character of the contents, and in general with regard to their approach and function in relation to each specific exhibition. The museum has simply tried an array of strategies for conveying information.

Finally, Jeff Werner reviews how Moderna Museet has been received by foreign media. Moderna Museet's self-image is based partly on the fact that it was recognised as a major international player at an early stage. This study reveals how Moderna Museet in Stockholm has been portrayed over the past fifty years, especially in Helsinki, Paris and New York.

On the initiative of Moderna Museet's current director,

Lars Nittve, the artists Marysia Lewandowska and Neil Cummings were invited to contribute an artistic intervention to the book. Many contemporary artists work with research and history as an artistic practice. Lewandowska and Cummings exemplify this approach and have previously collaborated in, for instance, the project *Capital* (2001), which involved the Bank of England and Tate Modern, London. They have participated in some of the seminars for the reference group and research team and have studied a large number of documentaries about and from Moderna Museet. They were also aided by browsing through parts of the museum archives in search of material for their project. In *The History Book* they present a vision for the future of Moderna Museet and the modern art museum of the future. This project reminds us yet again that studies and contemplations of our history actually reflect our own contemporary era, and that this book is a starting point for future activities at Moderna Museet.

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