



# The History Book

On Moderna Museet 1958–2008

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## Double Bind Moderna Museet as an Arena for Interpreting the Past and the Present

Over the last few decades, many have asked themselves: what sort of place do we go to when we want to look at art? It might be a small private gallery or a huge public museum, two venues that both offer a special kind of space that the visitor enters into in order to *see*. The space itself – usually referred to as the “white cube” – is designed to be as neutral and invisible as possible; a space that establishes a border to the outside world, that isolates the art and (by implication) regulates the viewers’ movements and patterns of perception. What is the significance of this boundary? And how should this place be defined?

Often quoted in this context is Michel Foucault’s description of certain kinds of places that exist in the midst of society, but which are governed by other conceptions and rules than the rest of society, places that are real but which create another kind of reality. He calls these places *heterotopia*.<sup>1</sup> The heterotopic place unites different spaces and mindsets that seem incompatible with each other, that encompass disparate concepts of time, that imply a system of openings and closings that both isolate the particular function of that space and regulate its relationship to the outside world. The cemetery is such a place, as is the theatre, park, library, cinema – and the museum.

To speak of a museum, or more precisely a museum of modern and contemporary art, as a heterotopia means to understand that institution as complex, dynamic and highly ambivalent. If one studies Moderna Museet’s fifty-year history, this seems to me also to be an apt description. Not because the museum has always come across as being incredibly dynamic or exciting, but rather because it is here that one can glimpse a special form of logic that characterises the exhibition space and the museum as a place that is at once isolated from and related to the outside world. In this respect, the presentation of the history of modern art by displaying a collection and temporary exhibitions is as much about a series of narratives as it is about something that actually exists or has existed “out there”, beyond the confines of the museum, art history, art definitions, and critical evaluation. For this place is not just a physical space, but also an imaginary one, based on concepts and ideas.

Moreover, understanding the issues facing the modern art museum also involves something else, namely observing the focal point between history and the present. In a museum of modern and contemporary art one can distinguish a complex system of rules and expectations in which this focal point is *dramatised* much more clearly than, for example,

in history museums or museums of older art. The present is stamped onto this institution like a hallmark. The name itself – *Moderna Museet* – bears witness to the particular paradox that the meeting between the contemporary and history involves: like two alternately attracting and repelling magnetic poles continuously and mutually constituting and contradicting each other.

This is a relationship that on one level has posed a difficult dilemma for every museum’s management, since what is sanctioned as “contemporary” today may seem irrelevant or wrong both to its own contemporaneity and to posterity. But then one should also consider that the museum of modern art has played a more profound role than any other institution in shaping the perception of modern art in the twentieth century. The crux of the dilemma is not merely the prospect of committing embarrassing mistakes, but equally about the role that this type of institution has played within the art world since World War II. The institutionalisation of modernism as modern art following World War II also constituted a radically altered situation for the individual artist’s work process, where each formulation of “the new” is recorded as tradition right from the start. But this formulation also meant the reverse: that a set historical narrative derived from the present was established, creating a specific historical horizon for interpretation.

Thus, one can identify a historical turning point when the museum of modern art became established as a specific museum type throughout the West, and when modernism became established as the primary cultural expression for the modern age. This institutionalisation actually first got underway at the beginning of the 1930s, but only reached full strength after World War II (in the political context of the Cold War). Alongside the establishment of modern museums and collections of modernist art, one could also see how leading modernist artists assumed key positions at art academies and within art education, how survey works on the history of modern art were published, how a large number of new magazines on the topic of modern art began to appear, how leading modernist artists received top awards at the biennales of Venice and São Paulo, how ambitious exhibitions were mounted focusing on the history of modernism or leading modernist artists, etcetera. Perhaps the most paradigmatic example of this institutionalisation was the founding of *Documenta* in Kassel, as a regularly recurring exhibition aimed at establishing a connection between the historic avant-garde and the contemporary art scene.

To speak here of institutionalisation means that it is possible, in purely physical terms, to perceive and experience the temporal and spatial paradoxes that constitute the modern museum. Two other aspects that are built into this type of institution, and which always seem to collide, are dramatised here: *power* and *interpretation*. Much of Moderna Museet’s prestige and identity are derived from the museum’s ability

← From the exhibition *Ararat*, 1976

From the exhibition *Wounds*, 1998



to actively pose questions about history and the present that have not automatically involved the handing down of an established canon. One could say that the *radicality itself* has become a hallmark for the museum, and that Moderna Museet (during certain periods) has thereby succeeded in pulling off a very difficult balancing act: to function both as a suitable space for the collections of the Swedish state, and as an arena for a cultural avant-garde.

This could be described as an institutionalisation according to Charles Baudelaire's definition of modernity: "the transient, the fleeting, the contingent; it is one half of art, the other being the eternal and the immovable".<sup>2</sup> Modernity, in this sense, is not only referring to change, progress, the new, but just as much to history and the norm of tradition. Understanding the museum of modern art from this perspective – as a heterotopic place – seems to imply a number of particularly complicated temporal contexts. A fundamental aspect, as we have seen, is the staging of the relationship between contemporary and historical time. But within each and every one of these temporal aspects, one can distinguish between what might be called descriptive and normative time: a purely chronological determination of a temporal context (in the present and in the past) and *the evaluation* of this context – where the idea of physical time is occasionally transcended to a conception of "eternal values" beyond any connection to real time. Thus, both time and space in the modern museum seem to be characterised by ambivalence between the real and the metaphorical.

How an institution like Moderna Museet should formulate its purpose and the contents of its operations was at first unclear, since the *museum type* itself was not clearly defined. Various models were brought up during the debate of the 1950s, in particular the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and Musée national d'art moderne in Paris, but both of these distinctly different models were rejected for various reasons.<sup>3</sup> The so-called Nationalmuseum Committee report published in 1949 defined the function of the new museum as providing an overview "of the full scope of Swedish and international contemporary art, including painting, sculpture, drawing, and graphic art, as well as applied arts."<sup>4</sup> At the same time, the report laid out the dangers that the new institution might exercise too much authority over the Swedish art scene: the authority through its selections to exert too much influence over the contemporary art scene, the authority to establish an image of its own contemporaneity that posterity would find inadequate.

The solution to this dilemma implied that Moderna Museet would function as a kind of *transitional museum*, i.e. a museum whose collection would gradually, over time be moved on to the mother institution (Nationalmuseum).<sup>5</sup> Thus, Moderna Museet would both be able to reflect the fluidity and constant shifts of the present without being hobbled by history, and be guaranteed greater freedom of action with regard to the demand for quality in new acquisitions. Let us consider this idea for a moment. Imagine a Moderna Museet whose collection was gradually transferred to the Nationalmuseum, and only included art from a historical

period stretching back some fifty years, where Robert Rauschenberg's *Monogram* would today constitute the museum's oldest artwork, soon to be literally sent across the bridge to the Nationalmuseum. In this scenario, Moderna Museet (and perhaps to an even greater extent the Nationalmuseum) would be forced to engage in a completely different kind of enterprise, characterised by gradual change rather than permanence. The museum's identity would also be shifted away from the collection to activities in the here and now. It is possible that this would result in an increased sense of "historylessness" and the museum's operations would undoubtedly be characterised by constant fits and starts.

The fact that the museum was devised from the start as a transitional museum is described by Pontus Hultén as a way for Nationalmuseum to retain control of its new annex.<sup>6</sup> But the question is fundamentally more complicated and interesting than that. The concept of a transitional museum was from the very start intimately associated with the emergence of museums of contemporary art. The first example was the Musée du Luxembourg set up by the French state in 1818, which acted as an annex and conduit museum for the Musée du Louvre.<sup>7</sup> On one level, this type of museum comes across essentially as a kind of transit hall (or perhaps a quarantine) to "Eternity", where the artworks can get rid of their contemporary infection to subsequently become part of history – or (if the infection proves incurable) be sent into storage. That was presumably more the case back in 1818, when the issue of the uncertain quality of contemporary art appeared to be the main problem, and where the question was whether an artwork would survive the transition from historic time to be inducted into the Pantheon of eternal values (Musée du Louvre/Art History). But at the same time, this is a construction that springs from the dilemma of the relationship between the contemporary and history.

This was also in line with what Otte Sköld, the prime mover behind Moderna Museet, advocated in 1950:

*A modern museum should be an organisation in the service of the contemporary art scene. It should be fluid and experimental, experimenting even with the very concept of the museum itself. At the same time, it should be a central furnace and assembly point for everything of value within contemporary visual art, for important architectural designs and urban planning projects, and possibly high-quality applied and industrial arts. It has even been proposed that room be made for films of high artistic accomplishment. A modern museum should furthermore be a centre for art propaganda, as well as for art education, and should seek to coordinate these operative factors into a living art scene, so that they are put to efficient use. Furthermore, the modern museum should establish a permanent exhibition, and loan program. In other words, quite a wide-ranging agenda.*<sup>8</sup>

The function of a modern museum was, thus, not simply as a place for the public display of contemporary art, but as an institutional hub with an important responsibility to coordinate and organise various facets of the Swedish art

scene. The primary task of Moderna Museet was to be an *active participant* in the contemporary art scene: the mobility and experimental vigour were accentuated. But the closer the museum came to being realised, the more its normative and more conventional museum-related functions were emphasised. Although Sköld did point out in his speech at the opening of Moderna Museet in 1958 that the museum was to be a stage for progressive contemporary art, he also put a completely different emphasis on its normative role within the Swedish art scene:

*We hope that our modern museum will be a museum for the public, for Everyman, a focal point for the contemporary art debate, and for the conflicting ideas of the age, inspiring comparison and self-examination in artists, reflection and composure in critics, enthusiasm and service in museum directors, and exploration and art experiences in the art-loving public.*<sup>9</sup>

Of course it is perilous to read too much into an official speech like this, but there is undoubtedly a scope to the verbs he uses that may seem timid, but which effectively combine the experimental with the normative. Otte Sköld's words would subsequently be proven true, albeit in a rather different way than he probably intended. There is no doubt that during the 1960s the museum came to function as a hub for the Swedish art scene, but not primarily as a space for "reflection" and "composure", but as a state-owned arena for various kinds of historical re-interpretations and manifestations of experimental art forms. Through a combination of exhibitions like *Movement in Art* (*Rörelse i konsten*, 1961), *4 Americans* (*4 amerikanare*, 1962), *American Pop Art* (*Amerikansk pop-konst*, 1964) and *She – A Cathedral* (*Hon – en katedral*, 1966), together with a very active programme involving a variety of events, the museum gained an international reputation as a highly independent stage for contemporary and modern art.

The fact that Moderna Museet became a period museum with a permanent collection at the beginning of the 1960s was a very important change. For it is precisely because the Louvre-Luxembourg system was *not* realised that one could speak of the modern museums established from the middle of the twentieth century onwards as a new museum type. Both the Museum of Modern Art and the Musée national d'art moderne were originally intended as conduit museums (for the Metropolitan Museum of Art and Musée du Louvre respectively) but over time became established as autonomous organisations with permanent collections. Thus, not only was a specific museum type established, but also a set *narrative structure* in the post-war public sphere; a structure that came to constitute a normalised matrix for interpreting the present and its recent history.<sup>10</sup> The historical selection was formulated in such precise words that the verb "modern" fused the time period (the twentieth century) with a particular aesthetic direction (modernism).<sup>11</sup> Within the modern period museum, a specific and all-encompassing benchmark of historical interpretation was created and reinforced, which every other representation had to relate to and be measured

against.<sup>12</sup> What is revealed here is a coactive pattern of narration and institution that came to function as a code for *the historically normal* in the then current understanding of modern art.

As an illustration of this, one could take the permanent display of Moderna Museet's collection, which for decades – up until the closure of the museum for refurbishment in 1994 – presented the same selection in a similar fashion. What it amounted to was a stroll along a set path through the history of modernism, from Edvard Munch to Jasper Johns. Anyone who wandered through the permanent collections at the Museum of Modern Art, the Stedelijk Museum, the Guggenheim, the Tate Gallery or the Centre Pompidou during the same period – or read a general history of modern art, or took a survey course in art history at university – is very familiar with the route and the narrative that goes with it. It is a narrative in which the individual works may vary, but where any particular work could essentially be exchanged for something similar without anyone losing their way, because the most important thing is to be able to represent *the narrative as a whole* (the successive emergence of all the various isms) rather than pointing out specific details.

Now one could of course think that such a standardisation flies in the face of what was said at the beginning about the relative openness, ambiguity, and ambivalence of the heterotopic place, its ability to both isolate a particular logic *and* relate it to the world at large. This is probably also partially the case. One could say, to borrow a phrase from Hans Belting, that the collection removes its artworks from the visitor's real time and the chaotic blur of the present to a space that is characterised by *mythical time* – like a temple in which each artefact remains (permanently) locked in the isolated universe of the historical narrative.<sup>13</sup> But looking at an institution like Moderna Museet, it is not primarily in the collection itself, nor the presentation of the collection that its openness and radicality has lain. The collection and its individual iconic artworks may be important to the museum's identity, but if one is to understand its periodic attempt to operate within and reinterpret the focal point between history and the contemporary, one would do better to study its exhibitions. It is also here that the relationship between power and interpretation has been at its most evident, where "the contemporary" has acted as an interface to the outside world.

What I am referring to is not Moderna Museet's exhibition practices in general, but a particular type of exhibition rather difficult to define, that has thematised the problem of creating a mutually constituting relationship between the contemporary and history: where a certain historical view becomes visible and relevant on the basis of a particular interpretation of the contemporary, and where an exacting interpretation of the contemporary is made possible by the presentation of a singular historical context.

In the history of Moderna Museet one can distinguish a number of such exhibitions, but I would like to focus on just a few of them: *Movement in Art* (1961), *The Inner and the Outer Space* (*Den inre och den yttre rymden*, 1965), *Implosion – A Postmodern Perspective* (1987) and *Wounds: Between*

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*Democracy and Redemption in Contemporary Art* (Sår, 1998). Here an ambiguous temporal perspective emerges and is dramatised in that each case displays clear prophetic qualities, in which the formulation of the contemporary carries with it a vision of a possible future. Furthermore, I will discuss *Ararat* (1976) and to some extent *Vanishing Points* (*Flyktpunkter*, 1984), which, although they constitute a different type of exhibition, still raise issues that have been important in my analysis.

These exhibitions only make up a small fraction of the total when you look at the entire fifty-year history of the museum. But in reality they have been of crucial significance to the museum's identity and for the Swedish art scene, by introducing themes, turning points, and models of interpretation that, entirely or partly, have given rise to a changed (and a changeable) understanding of both contemporary art and the history of modern art.

### *The Contemporary as Reality and Metaphor*

Ever since the time of Baudelaire, descriptions of contemporary art, culture, and society have mostly emphasised their evanescence, dynamism, change and diversity. We could see this in the conclusions of the Nationalmuseum Committee of 1949, and the theme returns over half a century later in the foreword of *The Moderna Exhibition* 2006: "Finding what is contemporary is, we should assume, impossible. Or rather, finding a single example of the contemporary is impossible. There are several instances of the contemporary in existence at any one time – contemporarily."<sup>4</sup> This way of expressing it might seem dutifully circumspect. Further, it can also be seen as a transcript of the trope that has exerted the greatest influence by far over the modern era's self-image – and that has survived and been accentuated further in our postmodern age: the image of the contemporary as unceasing change, increasing diversity and accelerated fragmentation.

The term "contemporary" can itself seem neutral, like a descriptive identification of a temporal relationship, that this work of art is contemporary (to us) because it was just made. But there is also a normative dimension embedded in this identification: this work is contemporary because it bears a *relevance* to our contemporary time. Regardless of whether one's view of history is characterised by the emphasis on open pluralism, or by a stricter understanding of an inner necessity, the principle of relevance is an ever-present selection criterion. Mounting an exhibition that comments on a contemporary period inevitably involves an active decision that can be seen both as a provocation and as an endorsement. The selection of the art, the manner in which it is installed and presented, the tenor of the catalogue and the educational work all say something about the adoption of a particular position regarding ongoing events. Thus, in the interpretation of the contemporary, there is always an active relationship between art and the tendencies of the society at large. It is through this context that a particular selection can be legitimised as particularly interesting or relevant to one's own time.

Historically speaking, this is also a process that has been going on throughout the modern era. The question of what is relevant to contemporary time has been posed here in a distinctly different manner than in the past. When Johann Joachim Winckelmann praised ancient Hellenistic art in *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums* in 1764, he was taking a position in his contemporary time: he proclaimed a direction reaching backwards in time for the purpose of guiding contemporary artists into the future. The nineteenth and twentieth centuries have since seen innumerable proposals, decrees and reformulations of what is contemporary in contemporary art, ranging from neoclassical nostalgia to futuristic longing. Every such formulation has also been accompanied by some kind of moral and ideological imperative. The issue has never been what the contemporary *is* but rather what it *ought to be*. Every selection, every extract, every interpretation, and every presentation of the contemporary – no matter how stripped down and purely aesthetic – is therefore always, in a sense, political as well.

This is a never-ending battle, that intensified over the course of the twentieth century, and that at times caused some interpreters to mistake the continuous change that characterises the art world, with changes in fashion. Though there is certainly an element of fashion in the contemporary art world where newness is a buzzword, the main impetus behind the logic of constant change is considerably more complex than the notion of a series of superficial shifts in style would suggest. It is in the "contemporary" that a particular historical perspective gains relevance; it is in the "contemporary" that particular expressions are excluded as *non-contemporary*; it is in the formulation of the "contemporary" as an institution that the modern art museum can secure its prerogative of interpretation – and subsequently also lose it.

Thus, the contemporary is both a necessary and a hazardous category for a modern museum, necessary to get a grip on, and dangerous because the museum stakes its prestige on a given selection and a given presentation. There have been times when Moderna Museet has managed to attain a position where it has not only succeeded in reflecting the contemporary just as it is being formed, but also where it has even appeared to be playing an active part in driving development forward. The museum's heroic image of the 1960s was itself derived to a large degree from this. But like all images, this one, too, has many layers, and there are several possible ways of interpreting it. The interesting thing here is not to posthumously judge the various initiatives that have been undertaken, but rather to try and analyse *how* a certain contemporary period has been presented, using what rhetoric, which tropes and concepts.

During the fifty years that Moderna Museet has been in existence, the formulation of the contemporary has changed character many times. A slightly laconic yet very appropriate observation was made by Leif Nylén in a review where he compared two different pieces from two separate exhibitions, a windmill from *Ararat* and a monumental Alexander Calder mobile from *Movement in Art*:

← From the exhibition *Movement in Art*, 1961



*Just how related and at odds these two exhibitions are becomes clear before you even enter the museum, where the windmills share the space with Calder's fifteen-year-old mobile. Whereas Calder's constructions harness electricity in order to create a moving symbol for the natural elements, the windmills harness nature's kinetic energy to generate electrical power.*

*Calder's mobile stands as a monument to a presumably concluded era in the history of Moderna Museet. Why not henceforth let it be accompanied by one of the windmills – as an alternative signpost, and the starting point of a new tradition? Perhaps its electrical power could be used to power the mobile.<sup>15</sup>*

At this point, a rather astonishing perspective opens up that questions the purpose of contemporary art – and of the modern art museum. The irony of the immobile mobile receiving help from the contemporary “alternative” technology was, rhetorically speaking, crystal clear. Not only had the contemporary that Calder once represented now become history, it was furthermore being presented in all its utopian detachment and came across as a metaphor for a modernism that was as ill-conceived as it was obsolete. The windmill, on the other hand, did not seem to reflect the contemporary in an aesthetic or metaphorical way, but constituted a technology that could tackle problems in a very concrete way: *the contemporary as reality rather than metaphor.*

Naturally, as Nylén also pointed out in his review, this was all about how one monument replaces another. The point is and was not whether the windmill really generated electricity, but rather what sort of *representation* of the contemporary it constituted. In other words, the difference between the windmill and Calder's mobile stemmed from a difference in interpretation of the contemporary, which in turn constituted an all-encompassing representation. The windmill, like the mobile, was a sign within a larger text, and as such was essentially replaceable. But a sign for what?

Posing such a question leads inevitably beyond the context of the exhibition itself, to society at large. *Ararat* was a very ambitious undertaking that, during the spring and summer of 1976, made use of Moderna Museet's premises as well as the surrounding area. The name was an acronym for “Alternative Research in Architecture, Resources, Art and Technology”, but was also an allusion to the mountain where Noah's ark landed during the Great Flood. The exhibition looked nothing like a typical art exhibition, but rather had the character of a creative and aesthetically considered presentation of the relationship between energy supply, distribution issues, and technology in the contemporary world. The objective was proclaimed in a manifesto printed on the inside cover of the exhibition catalogue:

*Those who have more, get more, while those living at the existence minimum meet with ever worsening conditions. All groups in society recognise this fact, yet there is dividing line running between those who merely observe it and others who work for a change. [...] The exhibition's main problem is the skewed distribution pattern which characterises the world generally,*

*and the fact that flows continue to run in the wrong direction. This exhibition deals with the future [...] It has become increasingly necessary to do away with the prevailing society's relations between capital and labour, between oppressor and the oppressed. In addition we must dispense with technology which devastates nature and our own life conditions. We need to distinguish between the logical future, which is a development of the present, and the desired future, which is the world we want to create.<sup>16</sup>*

The future here referred to production, energy supply and social systems, and the exhibition aimed to provide the visitor with “impulses and inspiration to take active part” by, among other things, introducing “alternative technology”. The exhibition also had a very deliberate form. It consisted of a passage with a number of way stations, where the visitors wandered from the forecourt's suggestive constructions through the front entrance into the inferno representing the current state of affairs, to then enter into and be cleansed by the alternative possibilities of the future before – finally – themselves taking part in shaping that future.<sup>17</sup> The form was rather reminiscent of a rite of passage, where the visitors were ushered through a number of way stations before ultimately *performing* those meanings themselves that the organisers wanted to highlight.

Today, some thirty years later, the issue of energy and distribution policy that *Ararat* presented may seem more relevant than ever. In other ways, however, the time separation instead reveals a deep chasm between then and now. In particular, this can be said of the exhibition's *modus*, the manner in which a political problem is presented at an art museum: the prevailing social system was described in Marxist terms of “oppressors and oppressed” and the purpose of the exhibition was to actively influence the visitor in a *specific* direction. Furthermore, art's place in the exhibition was completely subordinate to the political message. In the catalogue texts, art played a negligible role (the very word art was conspicuous by its almost total absence). In a tabloid that was handed out at the part of the exhibition that represented Sweden at the 1976 Venice Biennale, one of the participants, Lennart Mörk, pointed out that “the important thing as I see it is that we as artists have given up our ambition to produce a unique work of art.”<sup>18</sup> This statement may not have encompassed everyone involved in *Ararat*, but it undeniably characterised art's place within the exhibition theme. It was also a statement that identified a specific historical context.<sup>19</sup>

Yet, it would be wrong to speak of an absence of artistic understanding. On the contrary, this interpretation was a central feature – as a means of illustrating the issues in an informative, creative and rhetorically effective way. If you take the third way station as an example, the rendition of the present as a dark cave was a collaboration between students from Konstfack (University College of Arts, Crafts and Design) and Teckningslärarinstitutet (Institute for the Training of Teachers of Drawing), where the point was to create expressive and clear images of the very negative state of affairs at the time. Even the way station that was characterised as

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the “exhibition’s power centre”, the populated sculpture of the main hall, was itself an artistic treatment. This comprehensive composition of the space had obvious forerunners in some of the more celebrated exhibitions of the 1960s, above all *Movement in Art, She – A Cathedral* (*Hon – en katedral*, 1966), and *The Model* (*Modellen*, 1968). As sources of inspiration, the *Dada Exhibition* (1966) and *Vladimir Tatlin* (1968) probably also played a significant role. These and other exhibitions formulated alternative ways of thinking about – and presenting – art that was part of twentieth-century art history. Thus, artistic formulation played a key role in *Ararat*, even if that role was secondary to the ideological purpose.

If one wants to trace similarities between *Ararat*’s objectives and those of any other Swedish exhibition of the twentieth century, one probably has to go back to the *Stockholm Exhibition* of 1930, which, with its radical housing programme, functionalist buildings, and rationalist comprehensive approach, gave modernity a coherent visual form that would correspond to a unified rational identity and ideology.<sup>20</sup> It did not employ the same radical political phraseology, but it did display an equally clear desire to stake out *the only path* toward a desired future. In both cases, it was above all about presenting possible and necessary changes and reformulations to the modern project, with the obvious difference that *Ararat*’s presentation of the future was the complete opposite of the *Stockholm Exhibition*’s straightforward, industrialised and urbanist faith in progress. What was considered the desired future in 1930, was itself the threat just fifty years later. But *Ararat* did not present some anti-rationalist utopia either (even if there were nostalgic descriptions of premodern societies and “technology from developing countries” as representatives of a truer and more authentic technology and way of life), but rather a way of proving a rationality that went beyond modernity’s linear concept of progress and calculated the more long-term and complex consequences of progress.

It is as a sign for this context that one can understand the windmill in the forecourt. At the same time, however, one has to bear in mind that the windmill was described in the catalogue as a “wind sculpture”. It was not standing there to generate electricity, or even to represent alternative power generation, but above all to draw attention to the beauty inherent in this construction. Like the surrounding ecological buildings, the sun and wind sculptures had a particular appearance – an “alternative” look, if you will. The so-called *Form House* is a clear example. It was built out of natural materials that had been salvaged from building sites and rubbish skips. The point was to present an architecturally expressive form that sought beauty in the discarded, and the random element in reused materials.<sup>21</sup> Conceptually this was not very different from either Claes Oldenburg’s or Edward Kienholz’s reuse of objects and images that society had discarded, forgotten and repressed in their works of the early 1960s. The difference here is that the purpose was to transform the discarded element into a sign for an alternative

society rather than to create an alternative (and to varying degrees socially critical) aesthetic. In this respect, the *act* of reusing discarded material was itself probably as important a symbol in 1976 as the steel-tube chair was emblematic of the machine age in 1930 (regardless of whether the chairs had in fact been built by hand or the boards actually pulled out of a skip). A symbol that in both cases stated very firmly that this *is* indeed the contemporary and that this is *necessary* in order for us to meet the future. The role of history in both cases was above all to act as a terrible warning.

Calder’s mobile on the other hand could hardly be said to possess that kind of powerful and clearly identifying symbolic significance, rather it pointed to a poetry of motion, conveyed through the gradual movement of the forms through the space. The context for which the mobile was constructed, however, painted a somewhat different picture. In the opening lines of the catalogue for *Movement in Art*, Pontus Hultén described contemporary art as being split:

*Contemporary art is often pessimistic, defeatist, and passive; only natural one might think. But there is also another kind of modern art. It is some of this that the exhibition wants to show (dynamic, constructive, joyful, confusing, ironic, critical, playful, aggressive ...). It is surely also typical for its time.*<sup>22</sup>

Expressing himself in a rather off-hand manner, Hultén pointed out, almost with a shrug, that the present is divided. Here we are light years away from the righteous solemnity that characterised *Ararat*. But in the final lines of the catalogue, Hultén nonetheless managed to work up to a certain level of passion:

*Art is on its way to becoming active and dynamic. It is leaving behind the old formulas that belong to a static worldview and a society striving for stability. These new creatures of art live in an enviable freedom. They stand outside all laws and are unfettered by any systems. They represent a freedom that without them would not exist. This art exemplifies pure anarchy at its most beautiful. [...] But one is mistaken if one believes it to be harmless. It is a latent attack on established order.*<sup>23</sup>

Here the words were no longer spoken with a shrug, but rather with a quivering voice – and with a finger pointing toward the future. Hultén depicted a dualism that in many ways characterised the descriptions of modernity: stability and control on the one hand, and dynamism and anarchy on the other. Italian futurism appears here as an obvious model (which is also underlined by the many quotes in the catalogue taken from the futurist manifesto). Nonetheless, one must pay close attention to the shift in tone between the two quotations, which correspond to a subtle but not insignificant distinction. Behind the grandiloquent proclamation about art’s path into the future we glimpse an ironic Marcel Duchamp with a wry, inscrutable smile (“tongue in cheek”). The question is, what was Hultén trying to say by this?

*Movement in Art* revisited a number of small exhibitions of the 1950s where Hultén introduced and brought together

← From the exhibition *The Inner and the Outer Space*, 1965–66

aesthetic ideas, historical currents, and artists that definitely lay outside the established image of the history of modern art at that time. A prelude to this initiative was *Objects or Artefacts. Reality Fulfilled* (*Objekt och artefakter. Verkligheten förverkligad*) at Agnes Widlund's Galleri Samlaren in Stockholm in 1954, which he organised together with Oscar Reutersvärd. Some forty *objets composés*, constructions, mobiles, *objets trouvés*, readymades, and mathematical objects by mostly well-known Swedish artists, architects and critics were displayed. In conjunction with the exhibition, the first issue of *Kasark* came out, which was a combined magazine and exhibition catalogue that Hultén published together with Reutersvärd and Hans Nordenström. Four issues were published at irregular intervals between 1954 and 1960, each issue being printed in connection with an exhibition. These provided short, concise presentations of currents within modernism and the contemporary European avant-garde that were otherwise ignored in the Swedish art scene, with a basic attitude borrowed from Dadaism and a theoretical foundation rooted above all in the work of Duchamp.

However, the aim of these presentations was not primarily historical, but rather it was a way of creating alternative aesthetic frameworks for understanding contemporary art, where the historic avant-garde's example of dismantling "the barrier between art and reality" led the way to totally new possibilities in the contemporary.<sup>24</sup> In the second issue of *Kasark*, which came out in conjunction with Jean Tinguely's exhibition at Galleri Samlaren in the fall of 1955, Hultén gave a concise account of the history of kinetic art in the twentieth century. An aesthetic approach was presented here that experimented with changeable processes, that involved "a total rejection of the sacred values of earlier art" such as beauty and order, and which, according to Hultén, constituted "the most radical expression for some of the most fundamental ideas in modern art."<sup>25</sup> There was also a strong existential quality to this presentation, in which the interplay between technology and art was imbued with an overt scepticism toward the modern, mechanised society, and where technology and irony ultimately were just tools for achieving a higher end: the freedom of humanity. This idea was developed that same year in the exhibition *Le Mouvement* at Galerie Denise René in Paris, which consisted of three main sections: one historical section with moving sculptures by Duchamp and Calder, one with Victor Vasarely's paintings and Robert Jacobsen's sculptures, and one with younger artists like Tinguely, Jesus Raphael Soto, Pol Bury, and Yaacov Agam. The catalogue consisted of a fold-out booklet that included, among other things, Hultén's theoretical analysis of kinetic art by way of a distinction between the artwork as object and as process.<sup>26</sup>

A series of ideas were presented here that were radical for their time: criticism of the concept of art's enduring value, the identification of the processual nature of modern art, the reconstruction of alternative tendencies within modernism, and contemporary art's changed relationship to reality. These ideas also provided the basis for *Movement in Art*.

The main focus was placed essentially on the same artists

that had taken part at Denise René six years earlier (Agam, Calder, Duchamp, Soto, Tinguely). To a greater extent than in 1955, the emphasis was placed on the mechanical, futuristic and anti-aesthetic aspects of kinetic art rather than its relationship to geometric abstraction (op art). For the first time in Sweden, works and installations were exhibited from a number of young artists from the avant-garde scene in New York such as George Brecht, Marisol Escobar, Allan Kaprow, Jasper Johns, Alfred Leslie, Robert Rauschenberg, Richard Stankiewicz, and Robert Watts.

Jean Tinguely was really the key example and the actual point of departure for the exhibition: through his work with rattling, ironic, metaphorical, and partially dysfunctional moving sculptures, through his contacts with the old futurist Bruno Munari who guided him back to the tradition of kinetic art, and not least through his interest in Duchamp's readymades. Thus far, the ideas and rhetoric behind *Movement in Art* worked brilliantly. Kinetic art represented, to borrow a term from Hultén, a "vicarious freedom", but also constituted "a latent attack on the established order."<sup>27</sup> Even if this civilisation-critical ambition came across as rather vague and unfocused compared to *Ararat*, it could be seen as a consequence of the art exhibition's specific logic: to pose questions rather than present answers. This was especially true of an exhibition that so obviously sprang from a modernist tradition where the questions were to a greater extent addressed inwardly to the art world rather than to the world beyond. The claim to be presenting dynamic art in a dynamic time came across, in fact, as a statement on a purely metaphorical level. What was being shown were artists in history and in the present who had experimented with certain techniques, procedures and media that could be ascribed the value of being distinctive for the modern age, nothing more nor less.

A similar ambition appeared in the exhibition *The Inner and the Outer Space* (1965). The somewhat vague theme was presented by Hultén:

*Our concept of space is a product of our own imagination. The space that science talks to us about, physical space, we experience with our own eyes. But we have a hard time grasping it with our minds, when our sense of sight is no longer able to penetrate it. In order to see space you have to turn your gaze inward. [...] The image of space in art is an image of our ability to use our imaginations to penetrate the universe. Since everyone carries their own universe within themselves, these images also become images of ourselves.*<sup>28</sup>

The focus here was on three artists, presented with approximately fifty works each: Kasimir Malevich, Naum Gabo, and Yves Klein. In addition, there were thirty other artists from various periods, each represented by a single work. Here, too, a very advanced and profoundly alternative image of a central tendency within modernism was introduced. If Tinguely appeared as the contemporary point of departure for *Movement in Art*, Yves Klein assumed a corresponding position here.

It is rather interesting that Moderna Museet's two most ambitious thematic exhibitions by far during the 1960s proceeded so clearly from a European perspective, and from two artists who were both signatories to Pierre Restany's manifesto *Nouveau Réalisme* in 1960, at the same time that the image of Moderna Museet in the 1960s was so heavily influenced by the reception of American art.

Herein lies also the most obvious problem of the two exhibitions, namely how to relate a younger generation of American artists to such a distinctly European aesthetic context. *Movement in Art* was influenced to a large extent by a critical debate within European modernism from the 1950s, at the same time that the American avant-garde's reception of Duchamp (and the repressed traditions within modernism) was altogether different – just as the New York art scene at this time was characterised by slightly different aesthetic ideas and attitudes than Paris. Allan Kaprow may have given instructions for an *Environment* that was set up at Moderna Museet (with the assistance of among others Robert Rauschenberg), but how did the catalogue's account of the history of “kinetic art” and its grandiloquent proclamations about the dynamic art of the future explain the understanding of this chaotic space? Of course Kaprow could himself be quite “grandiloquent” in his tremendously detailed score and instructions for the various *environments* and *happenings*, but in a manner that was very different from the old European tradition of the manifesto. Reading Kaprow's own writings from this time, we see the emergence of a visionary presaging the birth of a completely new kind of art, but what he envisioned was not some futuristic utopia (a dynamic art for a dynamic future), but rather a more soft-spoken effort to register even the most banal impressions from everyday life: “He will discover out of ordinary things the meaning of ordinariness. He will not try to make them extraordinary.”<sup>29</sup> This short statement reflected a point of view that contrasted sharply with the historic European avant-garde: the registering of all kinds of objects as facts rather than symbols, the unwillingness to psychologise contemporary phenomena and objects, and the wariness of art's ability to transcend the world at large. If one is to speak of a “movement in art” in this context, one is not dealing with some mechanised dynamism, but with an attempt to push further and penetrate beyond the established boundaries of art and the various media.

A similar problem also appeared in *The Inner and the Outer Space*, where a widely disparate collection of artists were tossed in as a complement to the three linchpins of the exhibition – the American artists in particular appeared rather out of place in relation to the theme of the exhibition. Here, too, a distinct difference between Paris and New York during this period became (unintentionally) apparent. The exhibition also represented a break with the various aesthetic and artistic attitudes at the start of the 1960s. Alongside the heavy, romantically spiritual tendency, a new form of nihilism and absolute facticity revealed itself in the exhibition, in Ad Reinhardt's aesthetic antitheses, in Frank Stella's resetting of the functions of painting, and in Robert Morris's

and Donald Judd's redefinition of the formal, aesthetic and medial problems of visual art. These artists shared an aesthetic approach and a description of the contemporary that had very little to do with Yves Klein's metaphysics.

What the participating American artists did was reveal another context that acted more as a counterpart to exhibitions like *Vanishing Points* (1984) and *Implosion* (1987). The former exhibition, in particular, comes across as an interesting (and perhaps to some extent neglected) example of an interpretation that reveals a historic context beyond the conventional directions and categories. In *Vanishing Points*, Olle Granath focused on a number of artists with rather disparate aesthetic roots and formal idioms in order to investigate possible relationships and correlations by tracing their internal dialogue about art, society, politics, and the world at large. The participating artists included Sol LeWitt, Eva Hesse, Robert Smithson, Dan Graham, and Mel Bochner. The exhibition focused on the period 1965–70 and was thus a delimited historical study, on the surface considerably less historically ambitious than *Movement in Art* and *The Inner and the Outer Space*. But at the same time it made a similar attempt, despite its loose theme, to delve deeply into certain issues beyond the “normal” cataloguing of conventional historiography. And in this attempt it succeeded in doing precisely what the big thematic exhibitions of the 1960s failed to do, namely to create a relevant context for the shifting aesthetic positions of American art. At the same time, however, one has to point out that the rather advanced interpretation that *Vanishing Points* created was dependent upon Moderna Museet's operations during the 1960s. In exhibitions such as *4 Americans* (1962), *American Pop Art* (1964), *Claes Oldenburg* (1966), *Andy Warhol* (1968), and through various events like *Five New York Evenings* (1964), Moderna Museet (and Hultén) repaired the damage by presenting the new American sensibility – the new *form* of movement in art – in detail.

Of course this does not mean that today we can simply dismiss the significance of *Movement in Art* and *The Inner and the Outer Space* altogether. Most likely they offered (only in different ways) some of the most astounding experiences that the Swedish museum-going public had ever been exposed to. Naturally, one has to see them in their historical and institutional context. The anarchistic tone and the radical redefinitions of art in the small exhibitions of the 1950s passed by relatively unnoticed in the Swedish art scene. When similar ideas were presented at Moderna Museet just a few years later, they provoked a fierce debate.

The reason for this changed reception was of course linked to the change in place. Expressed by the state institution for modern art, the ideas took on a completely different authority and consequently amounted to a completely different kind of provocation. But one should also be aware of the historical situation. At the beginning of the 1960s, informal art had just won acceptance within the Swedish art scene as being on the absolute front line of contemporary art.<sup>30</sup> One can trace this rather drawn-out process in the comparison between the reception of two exhibitions from the beginning and the end of the 1950s: *Twelve Contemporary*



*American Painters and Sculptors (Tolv nutida amerikanska målare och skulptörer)* at Liljevalchs konsthall in 1953 and *Kring spontanismen* at Konstakademien (Royal Academy of Fine Arts) in 1959.<sup>31</sup> In the case of the former, for example, Jackson Pollock was dismissed as an unoriginal epigone and a surrealist medium whose art was secondary (or at best had decorative value).<sup>32</sup> Six years later the reception was a different one. *Kring spontanismen* was the focus of a well-informed but not uncritical discussion by a younger generation of Swedish critics, well acquainted with the theoretical and historical context of informal art.<sup>33</sup> Thorild Anderberg discussed the spontaneity in connection with “the abstract novel” (Alain Robbe-Grillet) and “aleatoric music” (Bo Nilsson), and suggested, like Ulf Linde, that the artist becomes a “proposal maker” who creates a situation in which the viewer becomes an active participant in the development of the work’s meaning.<sup>34</sup> Kristian Romare saw how the spontaneity derived from Dadaism seemed to lead art from image to living action, but that the artist now chose nevertheless to remain within the field of painting.<sup>35</sup> Moderna Museet also took part in this process of legitimisation through separate exhibitions with Sebastian Matta (1959) and Sam Francis (1960). In this context one can see Ulf Linde’s *Spejare* (1960) as the culmination of a process that confirmed the legitimacy and relevance of informal art, when he, on the basis of his in-depth interpretation of Duchamp, pointed to a new attitude toward truth and meaning in artists such as Pollock, Jean Dubuffet, Wols, Jean Fautrier, and Henri Michaux – an attitude that revealed a radical doubt and made the viewer co-creator of the artwork.<sup>36</sup>

But just at the very moment when this view had won acceptance and to a growing extent had come to set the tone of the discussion on contemporary art, Moderna Museet opened its doors to *Movement in Art*. Here a rather violent change took place. Because even if the actual substance of the idea had in fact already been discussed by many critics as far back as the late 1950s, here it was paired up with an art whose aesthetic boundaries extended far beyond informal and abstract expressionist painting. And the whole thing was presented to the public on a grand scale as that year’s annual summer exhibition.

One can detect this change in the so-called “Great Art Debate” of 1962, which reflected various reactions to the changed aesthetic, historical and theoretical landscape following *Movement in Art*. Here one can distinguish two opposing positions regarding the museum’s primary function and its relationship to the contemporary. On one side there was Torsten Bergmark, who defended art’s essential, inner values, and therefore believed that a modern museum had an obligation to proceed with “cautious vigilance”, and thus that it should not be allowed to take an active role in the contemporary, and should instead act as a “sanctioning confirmation of what *has* happened.”<sup>37</sup> Here one can see a value-conservative point of view that, if anything, seemed to argue that Moderna Museet should behave as the Musée du Luxembourg once did and let Time and History decide which modern art deserves a place next to the great masters. In opposition to this, Hultén countered (supported by Ulf Linde’s

radical doubt about art’s intrinsic value and significance) that the museum’s purpose was not “to issue endorsements” but to “provide an ever-current platform for art.”<sup>38</sup> The focus was moved here from history to the present, and the purpose of the museum was described not as historiographical but rather as a catalyst.

It is unlikely that many today share Bergmark’s defensive standpoint, but at the same time it seems obvious that Hultén, intentionally or not, played down and obscured the position of authority from which he himself could speak and act with the new museum as his platform. Because naturally Hultén’s exhibition and acquisitions policy did indeed constitute a very active selection – both in terms of the contemporary and history – where an established modernist narrative was brought into question. In actual fact, this exchange of views brought to the fore two different tendencies that Otte Sköld elaborated on in his speech at the opening of Moderna Museet in 1958: the experimental as opposed to the normative, although the notion of the experimental appeared here as norm.

This also reflects another important aspect of the exhibitions, namely their role as part of a wider cultural, sociological, and ideological change. One can speak of the merging of an aesthetic and social faithlessness that also came to be incredibly important to the political radicalisation at the end of the 1960s, a complex connection that Leif Nylén described in *Den öppna konsten* (1998):

*The aesthetic radicalism of the early '60s was in a way the opposite of the political radicalism that characterised the end of the decade, when one was quick to condemn modernist experimentation with form as bourgeois cleverness. In another way, it was a precondition or at least a premonition: open, transcendent art was the first to challenge established values, bring things to a head or turn them upside down, thence a radical impulse was propagated that spread and developed throughout the decade, questioned a growing number of ever greater orders, whether aesthetic, moral, social, or political. It is a tortuous, unpredictable process, full of setbacks, ideological volte-faces and role changes. What started out with Movement in Art ends up as a movement out of art – but I see it as still part of the same movement. The continuity in the '60s is at least as strong as its dynamism.*<sup>39</sup>

Here he starkly illuminated an obvious connection between *Movement in Art* and *Ararat* as the beginning and end of a process of change in the Swedish cultural life of the 1960s and 70s. A process that gradually pushed the envelope of what could be formulated in and about the present and history – and which also pointed to a gradual shifting of the prerogative to formulate questions in the Swedish art scene.

Moderna Museet assumed an important, but over time increasingly ambivalent position in this process. From having at first embraced change, it became increasingly difficult for the museum to embody its goals. From having been an arena for various forms of provocative exhibitions and culturally radical manifestations in the early 1960s, where the

museum's activities were often condemned by value conservatives, Moderna Museet was forced to respond to growing criticism from the opposite direction, where the museum's activities were accused of reflecting elitist bourgeois culture (or even acting as a megaphone for imperialist and capitalist forces). In 1971, an annex to the museum was opened called *Filialen* where Pär Stolpe was assigned the task of setting up an alternative arena, what was called "a critical exhibition programme", but this failed to solve the problems – if anything it made things worse.

Here we see some of the problems inherent in the concept of the contemporary, and which are also built into the place itself. How is a public institution like this supposed to reflect the contemporary and history at the same time, how is the museum supposed to accomplish the task of acting as a fitting space for official cultural policy, and simultaneously offering an alternative space for avant-garde and counter-cultural movements? Nevertheless, what one can observe is the serious attempt that was made in this respect, and which characterised Moderna Museet's operations during that time – operations that actually revealed the continuity within a larger cultural process of change. Without Calder's mobile, the windmill would presumably have been impossible to put up or understand within the context of Moderna Museet.

#### *Altered Position Findings*

In his preface to *Implosion* (1987), Lars Nittve's point of departure was the satellite broadcast of *Live-Aid* in 1985, which was one of the most sensational media events of the time. A gala performance was held at two main stages, in London and Philadelphia, featuring the most celebrated performers of the time, with the proceeds going toward famine relief in Ethiopia, which at the time was hit by a devastating drought. Everything was broadcast live via satellite over large parts of the world, so that up to 1.5 billion viewers could see and experience the event on TV. Nittve used *Live-Aid* as a rhetorical and well-known springboard to describe life in a postmodern age:

*Everything that was lured into Live Aid's electronic, gravitational field of signs and digital codes was simply absorbed by it – devoured, neutralized and made to disappear as in some kind of centrifuge in reverse: time and space, true and false, good and evil, everything! The differences that create meaning seemed to be effaced – the only thing left was somehow my fascination with the TV screen's flow of sounds and images... [...] A quagmire of electronic plasma in which the pillars of our modern view of the world – linear time, logical space, the cohesive subject – collapse; a hyper-space in which the difference between true and false, genuine and fake, original and copy, is devoured by an ever denser flow of transmitted and simulated "reality" [...] <sup>40</sup>*

On the basis of this collapse of physical, ethical and ontological constants, a selection of contemporary and historical artists were brought into focus: postmodernism as a diagnosis of the contemporary points toward a necessary future, and furthermore offers an alternative reading of history. The

famine in Ethiopia and its causes remain secondary in this context. This may or may not be seen as an increased level of cynicism, but it certainly marked a radical shift of perspective in the just over ten years that had passed between *Ararat* and *Implosion*.

What struck me as I read Nittve's preface is how accurately he captured that feeling of *alienation* that so characterised the understanding of postmodernism, within the theoretical discussion, the production of popular culture, and the art-critical reception. We are now faced with something radically different; who can *actually* visualise an implosion? This is borne out effectively by a fundamental theme in Nittve's preface, namely the inexorability and the extra-individual nature of a change that *has just taken place*, that *is already here*, that we *only now* are starting to grasp the magnitude of. The alienation effect can to a certain extent be said to be dystopian, but it is a completely different kind of contemporary dystopia than the one that was depicted in *Ararat*. It no longer deals with an economic and technological machinery that can be stopped, but a *condition* that apparently cannot be controlled (as if the world has gone from being neurotic to being psychotic).

Here one can start to pose certain critical questions. Does not the actual idea of a radical hybridisation of life itself carry with it something unsettling? Is there not also a dangerous, paralyzing and fundamentally antidemocratic tendency in the notion of the death of the great narratives and the inability to establish a fixed relationship between sign and signified? If we live in a world governed by hypercomplex linguistic, monetary, and technological systems beyond humanity's control, what can be said at all?

Now the idea itself of the big, uncontrollable and radical change is hardly new; on the contrary it is a fundamental trope in the Western view of modernity. In the wake of every technological revolution, every social, political and aesthetic change, one can find documents of a similar kind. Documents that testify to a terrified fascination and sense of alienation in the face of the new: fantasies about robots give way to fantasies about replicants (which in turn are replaced by fantasies about virtual worlds). One could call this a form of futuristic romanticism, we now find ourselves *on the other side* of an immutable boundary, not nostalgically looking back but staring around in amazement. It is hardly a coincidence that some of the most frequently used postmodernist metaphors dealt with death and endings (the end of history, death of the subject, death of ideologies, death of painting, etcetera).

But Lars Nittve's preface was much more concrete than that. He spoke above all about art, he wanted to explain an extensive aesthetic shift by revealing an alternative, anti-essentialist tendency within modernism. Here one can see a clear parallel to *Movement in Art*: by changing the questions posed in the present, a genealogical movement is made backwards in time, where alternative tendencies are revealed and well-known works of art and phenomena take on completely or partially new meanings. One could speak of a shift in perspective that in both cases sprang from Duchamp as a

historic turning point, and thence revealed a rather linear tradition into the present. The contemporary reference point in *Implosion* was a young generation of American postmodern artists, with names like Robert Longo, Sherrie Levine, Allan McCollum, Cindy Sherman, Barbara Kruger, and Louise Lawler. All of these artists are quite well known by now, but that is precisely why it is so interesting and worthwhile to read about the *Implosion* catalogue. Today, when both the theoretical developments and artistic practices that were introduced have long since become widely known (if not canonised) elements in our contemporary culture, it can be difficult to catch even a glimpse of the radical difference and alienation that postmodernism once seemed to represent.<sup>41</sup> There was a time when the artists who were exhibited in *Implosion* placed huge demands on the interpreter – unless he or she simply dismissed the whole lot as meaningless kitsch.

Let me take as an example the space with Allan McCollum's work/series/installation *Plaster Surrogates* and *Perfect Vehicles*. The visitor was met here by a series of black rectangles on white backgrounds, each with a different coloured frame. The effect was disorienting. Silence and emptiness filled many viewers who at the same time desperately tried to find *something* in the works to latch onto with their impressions and interpretations. The questions piled up. Why the title *Plaster Surrogates*? Why this repetition and monotony? Where should I look – does it make any difference if I examine one plaster surrogate instead of another, will I discover something of significance? Am I in fact looking in the wrong direction, no matter which rectangle I focus on? Perhaps some visitors were reminded of a certain art-historical reference, namely Kasimir Malevich's painting *Black Square on White*. But how was this historical context meant to be understood?

Naturally it was not for lack of imagination – the fact that McCollum returned to Malevich to reuse a visual form for want of anything else, and then repeat it ad absurdum. If anything, it was a conscious way of appropriating and deconstructing Malevich's (and thereby modernism's) *claims*. McCollum's series acted as a counter image to the notion of the unique work's authenticity and aura, to the concept of the artist's presence in the work (of the work as a perfect mouthpiece for metaphysical content): *irony* instead of spirituality, *division and fragmentation* rather than uniformity, *repetition and quotation* rather than original expression.<sup>42</sup> The title itself, *Plaster Surrogates*, hinted at something defective or secondary, where the plaster signified the casting, copying, and reduplication of an original rather than the original itself – in effect a surrogate that constituted the substitute for a lost original and a forever lost illusion.

In contrast to Malevich's (and modernism's) utopian visions about the new art and the new society, McCollum created a dystopian image of *absence* and *emptiness*. The unique artwork and the personal tone were replaced by a repetition of impersonal "surrogates". In one way, *Plaster Surrogates* comes across more like the physical manifestation of post-structuralist (and in particular Jacques Derrida's) philosophy, in which the sign cannot be said to possess an original

meaning or an ideal relationship to the signified, but rather constitutes a trace of something that is forever absent. The viewer's situation in the face of this work could in this context be seen as a dramatisation of the dilemma of interpretation: we try constantly to interpret the sign/language on the basis of various contexts in order to create meaning, but the sign evades every attempt to determine its meaning since it always leads to another sign, never to anything originally signified.

Thus, simply looking at McCollum's *Plaster Surrogates* in order to acquaint ourselves with the work and understand its significance means that we see nothing, since the artwork's meaning seems to largely depend on factors existing outside the image itself. The repetition of the black rectangles can, as Nittve points out, in this case be understood as a "sign for painting" rather than painting in the traditional sense, they signify the sadness associated with finding oneself on the other side of the boundary to one of modernism's most central narratives (where *Perfect Vehicles* in this context comes across the narrative's funeral urns).<sup>43</sup>

But the dependence on exteriority also points to a much more productive, critical, and if you will, political meaning. This becomes clear in the light of the shift in focus from "work" to "frame" that Craig Owens described as one of the most central aspects of postmodernism:

*Where do exchanges between readers and viewers take place? Who is free to define, manipulate and ultimately benefit from the codes and conventions of cultural production? These questions shift attention away from the work and its producer and onto its frame—the first, by focusing on the location in which the work of art is encountered; the second, by insisting on the social nature of artistic production and reception.*<sup>44</sup>

The actual boundary between art and the world at large implodes because it is an illusion: art as a linguistic sign is always part of any communicative situation involving the outside world. Clearly there is here, if not a direct political meaning, then at least an institution-critical one. Though the significance of the repetition and seriality in McCollum's works can certainly be understood in purely art historical terms (an application of the aesthetics of Andy Warhol and the minimalists), it can also be seen as a reference that points beyond the realm of contemporary art (a comment on late capitalism's methods of production and presentation, where series of identical products with marginal differences in details create an illusion of consumer choice).<sup>45</sup>

According to this interpretation, McCollum staged a language game that forced the viewer to engage in some kind of reflection, not merely on aesthetic and philosophical issues, but also institutional and political ones. Unlike the *rite of passage* that characterised *Ararat*, however, there was no specific final goal nor even any obvious political aspiration, but rather a game that perhaps revealed the game going on underneath, and which continuously referred back to the game's own logic (its shifting rules, theoretical conditions, historical references, spatial configurations etcetera). One could describe McCollum's strategy – and that of



postmodernism – as subversive rather than overtly political. There was, if you will, a vagueness, as Nittve also recognised in his preface to the exhibition *Trans/Mission* at the Rooseum in 1991, where he drew attention to the dilemma of the cultural and social homogenisation that characterised *Implosion*:

*The problem is, however, that in discarding hierarchy we also in this case discard difference, and it is difference, the interplay of dissimilarities, that gives rise to meaning and significance of every kind: linguistic, social, political, ethical. The dilemma was perhaps typical of the second half of the '80s. Those involved in the theory of criticism (not least art criticism) at the time may remember how a text might open with the anti-hierarchical effects of implosion and close with the post-feminist and post-colonial awareness of "the Other"; unfortunately the twain seldom met.*<sup>46</sup>

Here one can see a reflection of how postmodernism, as a cultural phenomenon, increasingly came to establish theoretical and critical perspectives for various political, social and academic directions during the 1980s and 90s. The issue that *Trans/Mission* made somewhat vague reference to has in this respect been one of the most immediately relevant of the past decade: art's globalisation and the art world's asymmetrical and unequal representation of cultures, groups, and individuals beyond an established historical canon based on a Western, male, heterosexual norm. The implicit question about identity and interpretation in *Implosion* proved to be more than just a sophisticated intellectual game, but an extremely pressing set of political and social issues.

This was accentuated some ten years later at Moderna Museet in the exhibition *Wounds* (1998), but there the tone was altogether different. In his preface, David Elliott described the exhibition's basic theme:

*The exhibition takes as its centre different manifestations of art which have appeared in Europe and America over the past forty years – years which have helped form the present. [...] The title Wounds addresses the fact that the territory within which so much modern art operates is located at points of either personal or social friction, rupture, disjuncture, and sometimes pain. [...] The premise on which this exhibition is based – that the parallels between art and life can now be more enjoyably and creatively understood in a moral-aesthetic rather than any ideologically driven sense, however tacit or submerged – would have been unimaginable a decade ago.*<sup>47</sup>

*Wounds* bore witness to this. It did not evoke the frightening and tantalizing perspective of a hybrid, nor political agitation's subordination of art in relation to society. If anything, it was a rather introverted and ordinary reflection upon a changed political and existential situation, and the effects of that situation as reflected in contemporary art. This, too, was largely a political exhibition, but a political exhibition that apostrophised rather than denied the value of the individual artistic expression and the significance of the individual work as a piece of art. If there is one thing that David Elliott

emphasised, it was the importance of quality in the individual work; only in this manner can it be assigned an immediately relevant aesthetic and political meaning.

The difference in metaphors between *Implosion* and *Wounds* also reveals a difference in theoretical and historical points of reference. Whereas *Implosion* sprang from Jean Baudrillard and Jacques Derrida, *Wounds* was rooted in Georges Bataille and Theodor Adorno. One can see a corresponding distinction among the participating artists. *Implosion* focused primarily on contemporary American art with above all Marcel Duchamp, Andy Warhol, and Donald Judd as historical sounding boards. *Wounds'* historical reference points, on the other hand, were Edvard Munch, Diane Arbus, and Joseph Beuys. The exhibition had no clear contemporary point of departure, but presented a range of widely varied artists, with names such as Marina Abramović, Louise Bourgeois, and Richard Billingham. Different media, different expressions, different aesthetic and ideological reference points were combined, but at the same time an effort was made to uncover and examine humanity's social and existential conditions (at times even in the outermost margins of existence). The relationship between the present and history were not presented here as a straight genealogy, but rather as a labyrinthine movement between various reference points – drawn from art history as well as from widely diverse social and intellectual contexts. There is no doubt that the aesthetic of display of *Wounds* represented not only another way of presenting different works, but a different ideal regarding historical perspective.

The differences between these two exhibitions can of course be explained by the contrasting aesthetic, theoretical and art-historical preferences that Nittve and Elliott represented. But I would argue that they also represented a more general shift, in terms of the theoretical landscape, in the way contemporary art was perceived, and with regard to historiography. In addition to this, there were of course the profound social and political changes brought about by the fall of the Berlin Wall.

This shift can perhaps best be seen by studying a few of the exhibitions that Nittve organised following his tenure as director of Moderna Museet. We can take *Now/Here* at Louisiana in 1996 as an example. Here there were obvious theoretical references to *Implosion* (expressly stated in Nittve's foreword), but at the same time criticism was levelled against certain experiences and changed positions that have led to a different exhibition form.<sup>48</sup> As in *Wounds*, the labyrinthine movement was clear to be seen at the exhibition, with various kinds of historical and theoretical cross-references, exchanges, and leakages. This was accentuated by the fact that Nittve simply brought in a number of guest curators to design and implement the exhibition – with the express purpose of getting away from the single authoritative perspective that the interpretation of the contemporary by a solitary voice represents, as well as a way of avoiding the single historical view that a linear narrative constitutes. Here one can discern





a similar attempt to adopt a critical approach and problematise the relationship both between the present and history, and between art and society. The motto for *Wounds* as for *Now/Here* – despite their internal differences – seemed to be a form of *critical pluralism* (which naturally should not be taken as some kind of consensus on the interpretation of the present or history).

The shift we are talking about here reflects a deep-seated ambivalence that has characterised the art world over the past few decades – as regards both theory development and formulations of the purpose and position of contemporary art. One can see this in the comparison between the interpretations of one of the three artists common to both *Implosion* and *Wounds*, namely Andy Warhol (the other two were Reinhard Mucha and Gerhard Richter).

In his article in the *Implosion* catalogue, Germano Celant proceeded from trendsetting science fiction films like *Robo-Cop* and *Blade Runner* in order to show how the “replicant” can be seen as a metaphor for a changed aesthetic condition:

*One has only to push this osmosis to its logical conclusion for the implosion to become the sinking of the real into the simulation. Every element of the reality is transported into the phantasmic world of copies and reproductions, to the point of “total relativity”. As Andy Warhol said, “Machines have less problems, I’d like to be a machine, wouldn’t you?” And, “In the future everyone will be famous for fifteen minutes.” And, “If you want to know all about me, just look at the surface of my paintings and films and me, and there I am. There’s nothing behind it.” [...] The emergence of sequences of images “without objective, without duration, and without future” (Jean Baudrillard) in Warhol’s canvases corresponds to a logic of implosion. These works accelerate the vanity and the vacuity of the human themes and tragedies they show; they irradiate the images – many of them instant snapshots – for an instant on the canvas as if to bring out their quality of the sacred, their “star worship”, but at the same time to burn them up, to consume them through repetition.<sup>49</sup>*

Perhaps one could say that the reading of Warhol (and several other artists) has in turn acted as a metaphor for a changed perception of the world: an existence characterised by surface, repetition, mediation, relativisation and – finally – emptiness, consumption and combustion. There was, however, no social criticism in Celant’s text, just an acknowledgement that this was a contemporaneity in which capitalism set the boundaries of existence, where the death of the subject was the consequence of “capitalism’s progress, its own revolution”.<sup>50</sup>

When Warhol was discussed in *Wounds* – in Alain Cueff’s essay “Ransom/Redemption” – it was done from a totally different angle. The point of departure for the text was the peculiar fact that the word “ransom” in French (*rançon*) was for a long time a popular doublet for “redemption” (*rédemption*), but that over time the two words came to develop

completely separate meanings: the former in the sense of “bribe”, and the latter (by way of Christianity) with the meaning “beatification” or “deliverance” – which also creates the theme for a comparison between Warhol and Beuys:

*Warhol claimed he wanted to be a machine, a socialite machine, a machine of the world. A theorist of mimicry, of the recorded, he knew perfectly well that he could no more become a machine than Flaubert became Madame Bovary. Absent from himself, disembodied, he was his own double. [...] Up to a point, Beuys shared Warhol’s mistrust of representation. But he expressed this feeling very differently, by resorting to the idea of “presentation” in both its phenomenological and its religious senses. By proclaiming that he was at the heart of art and of the world, he personified this redemptive destiny [...]. Warhol shamelessly ransomed the worlds of art, cinema, advertising and industry: by selling them literal images of themselves, void of intrinsic meaning, and quite without sentimentality. Transparent, open onto nothingness.<sup>51</sup>*

One interesting thing about these two interpretations of Warhol is that they are actually saying the same thing, only they differ in the values they reflect. Both are rooted in a Jean Baudrillard tradition of interpretation, a tradition that takes Warhol’s own assertions at face value and describes an art (and an existence) that is thoroughly superficial and *simulacral*.<sup>52</sup> It seems as if both exhibitions have need of a Baudrillardesque Warhol: as *role model* versus *antithesis*.

But this understanding is not completely representative of the actual exhibition *Wounds*, where Warhol’s *Orange Car Crash 10 Times* (1963) was placed next to Francis Bacon’s *Double Portrait of Lucian Freud and Frank Auerbach* (1964). One could argue that this hanging only evoked a stark contrast, that between Warhol’s cynical superficiality and Bacon’s existential angst lay an abyss of diametrically opposed attitudes about art and the world. But in the meeting between these two images a relationship also emerges, or a leakage, if you will, that conjures up a much darker understanding of Warhol. An understanding that comes close to Thomas Crow’s more “realistic” and existential interpretation and focuses on the ambivalent attitude and perhaps the socially critical potential that can indirectly be gleaned from Warhol’s images: a disturbed and deeply pessimistic vision of the present through a transformation of mass culture’s images to the surface of the artwork.<sup>53</sup>

Superficially, what this shows is how different contexts and horizons of understanding affect the interpretation of one particular work of art, we create the Warhol we need at the moment. But the example also points to something more fundamental, namely how the art of our time, to an ever increasing extent, has become a disparate, transmedial, dissonant and deeply ambivalent projection screen for the meeting between the real and the metaphorical as well as between history and the contemporary. Thus, the changes in the relationship between art and the outside world can be understood both in terms of a shifting philosophical horizon (post-structuralism) and a distinct need among many artists

to find a way to comment on and engage with the world around them through their art. Warhol comes across as an early and almost perfect exponent of this condition.

In an attempt to conflate the “simulacral” and “realistic” interpretations of Warhol, Hal Foster described how the relationship between sign and reality can be understood as a complex game of identifications and ruptures:

*repetition in Warhol is not reproduction in the sense of representation (of a referent) or simulation (of a pure image, a detached signifier). Rather, repetition serves to screen the real understood as traumatic. But this very need also points to the real, and at this point the real ruptures the screen of repetition.*<sup>54</sup>

The traumatic in this case appears as an inability to achieve a meeting with or a foothold in the world at large. A worrying aspect of this is the ambivalent manner in which Warhol created dissonant constellations of horrific documents from the world at large, and an ice-cold subtle aesthetic. The point, however, is the actual duality, the inability to relate to the outside world and at the same time the clear identification of and *within* that world. The question is whether the game with identifications and ruptures should only be looked upon as traumatic (like a disturbance in Warhol’s mental life or in American culture as a whole) or if it can be seen as a constituent model for the context of meaning in which the image operates: for the relationship of exhibition space to art, the world at large, the present and history. This means, therefore, that the changes that take place in the exhibition space do not move in only one direction. One cannot simply say that any object placed intentionally within the precincts of Moderna Museet is automatically transformed into art. Rather, one can understand this relationship as working in both directions. Though the object, or image, is certainly transformed, it also, simultaneously, enables both a metaphorical and a real opening to the world at large.

One could describe the complicated form of ruptures and exchanges that take place in this heterotopic place as a *sign economy*: a system for regulating symbolic transactions that possess a relative autonomy compared to society at large. The autonomy is relative because those transactions of information, meaning, and value taking place within this sign economy are always *reversible* and *compatible* with the outside world, they can move in opposite directions to one another, and they are (in some respects) compatible with each other. Ultimately, a sanctioned aesthetic value can always be exchanged for hard cash.

Thus, what happens inside the confines of the museum (or of the art world) is not a game to be taken lightly, but an activity that together with other kinds of sign economies interacts with the world at large and constitutes our image of reality. In this context, Andy Warhol’s *Orange Car Crash 10 Times* can be seen almost as a blueprint for how these ambiguous interactions, transactions and transformations – literally and figuratively speaking – *take place*.

More clearly perhaps than any other form of exhibition,

the distinctive kind of thematic exhibition that we have been discussing here points to the requirements for the interpretation and presentation of the exhibition space. It does not merely demonstrate an active relationship between history and the present, between the real and the metaphoric. Through its deliberate ambiguity it creates a labyrinthine context in which ideas, image genres, formal idioms, and historical gestures, activate and are themselves activated in the present. This is a context that perhaps has mostly to do with the particular logic of the art world and historiography, but which also points beyond these spaces to a world outside. It is exhibitions that combine different spaces and attitudes that on their own seem incompatible, that encompass disparate concepts of time that are related to one another, and *forced* to interact, that imply a system of openings and closings, and which thereby both isolate the particular function of the space and also regulate them to the world at large. But it is also exhibitions that through their themes are able to distil a complex context into a form that is both understandable and readable.



- 1 Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces" (1967/1984), *Diacritics. A Review of Contemporary Criticism*, vol. 16, no. 1, 1986, pp. 22–27.
- 2 Charles Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life" (1863), *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, ed. Jonathan Mayne, New York 1964/1986, p. 13.
- 3 Otte Sköld felt, for example, that the Musée national d'art moderne was too big and housed in unsuitable premises. Sköld, "Förord", *Det moderna museet. Vägledning över utställningen med modern konst ur Nationalmusei samlingar* (exh. cat.), Liljevalchs konsthall, Stockholm 1950, p. 8. Three years later he described The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) as an obvious model, an enthusiasm, however, that for various reasons seems to have cooled over time. Sköld, "Förord", *Tolv nutida amerikanska målare och skulptörer* (exh. cat.), ed. Otte Sköld, Liljevalchs konsthall, Stockholm 1953, p. 8. A key problem with both these institutions was that they were big, expensive period museums at a time when the focus in Sweden was more on a smaller, more flexible "transitional" museum. Another problem was the obvious misgivings that Sköld and many others began to feel about what was perceived as MoMA's extremely radical policy for exhibitions and acquisitions. Otte Sköld, "Ett museum för modern konst", lecture at Kungl. Akademien för de fria konsternas högtidssammankomst, 31 May 1956, p. 89f. Moderna Museets tillkomst. F4:1, Moderna Museets myndighetsarkiv (MMA).
- 4 *SOU 1949:39 Nationalmuseiutredningen. Betänkande angående Statens konstsamlingars organisation och lokalbehov*, p. 74. This study was commissioned by the Ministry of Education and Ecclesiastical Affairs in 1944 in order to provide a basis for a solution to the acute shortage of space at Nationalmuseum, and in 1949 it produced a report that forcefully advocated a separate museum of contemporary art. A brief account of the process leading to the creation of a new museum can be found in Otte Sköld's, "Ett museum för modern konst", *Moderna museet. En konstbok från Nationalmuseum*, ed. Bo Wennberg, Stockholm 1957, p. 11ff. See also Annika Hökerberg, *Moderna museets tillkomst och första verksamhet*, essay for proseminar in political science, Stockholm University 1968.
- 5 *SOU 1949:39 Nationalmuseiutredningen*, p. 80.
- 6 Pontus Hultén, "Moderna Museets tillkomst och första år", *Moderna Museet 1958–1983*, eds. Olle Granath and Monica Nieckels, Stockholm 1983, p. 32.
- 7 Eustathia P. Costopopulus, "Musée National d'Art Moderne", *Art Museums of the World*, ed. Virginia Jackson, New York/London 1987, p. 293. The so-called Louvre-Luxembourg system, whereby the works were deposited in the contemporary museum's collection up until the hundredth anniversary of the artist's birth, when they were either transferred to the Louvre's central collection or (those works no longer considered to be of primary significance) sent on to museums and institutions in the provinces.
- 8 Sköld, *Det moderna museet* 1950, p. 7.
- 9 Otte Sköld, "Tal vid invigningen av Moderna Museet d. 9/5 1958 11.30 a.m.", *Moderna Museet 1958–1983* 1983, p. 12.
- 10 For more in-depth analysis of this, see Hans Hayden, *Modernismen som institution. Om etableringen av ett estetiskt och historiografiskt paradigm*, Stockholm/Steag 2006, pp. 177–210.
- 11 An indication of the strong connotations of the adjective "modern" can be found in conjunction with the controversy relating to the decision of the Institute of Modern Art in Boston to change its name in 1948 to the (at that time) more neutral sounding Institute of Contemporary Art. See Serge Guilbaut, "The Frightening Freedom of the Brush: The Boston Institute of Contemporary Art and Modern Art" (1985), *Art Apart. Art Institutions and Ideology Across England and North America*, ed. Marcia Pointon, Manchester/New York 1994, p. 233f. The reason was that the museum management did not want to come into conflict with the then very powerful anti-modernist forces operating in America's cultural and political life. The name change distanced the organisation from the Museum of Modern Art, which at that time was the main bastion of modernism's defence.
- 12 Carol Duncan has described the uniformity of the modern museums' selection and narration, in Europe as well as the US, as a function of its task of presenting generally accepted values and forms of knowledge for the general public. Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals. Inside Public Art Museums*, London 1995/2002, p. 103. She distinguishes in this respect a hierarchy between various museums where MoMA has acted as a paradigm example not just with regard to the composition and presentation of the collection, but also regarding modernism's standard narrative. This narrative, however, is not just presented at museums of modern art all around the world, but also in various kinds of texts, articles, books and survey works. It also forms the basis for the oral passing down of the history of modern art through education at art schools and universities.
- 13 Hans Belting, *Art History after Modernism*, Chicago/London 2003, p. 100.
- 14 Magdalena Malm and John Peter Nilsson, "When Am I?", *The Moderna Exhibition* (exh. cat.), eds. Magdalena Malm and John Peter Nilsson, Moderna Museet, Stockholm 2006, p. 12.
- 15 Leif Nylén, "Två monument", *Dagens Nyheter* 17 Aug. 1976.
- 16 *Ararat* (exh. cat.), Moderna Museet, Stockholm 1976, the inside cover, signed by the "Ararat Working Group". The catalogue was designed like a folder with loose-leaf sheets describing various problem areas within the theme of the exhibition. In addition, eight thematic booklets were handed out that went into greater detail on the various issues. The curator was Björn Springfieldt. In 1973, an organisational group was formed that drew up the basic theme and subsequently invited various groups and individuals to take part in putting the exhibition together (over 100 persons).
- 17 *Ararat* consisted of the following way stations: (1) the forecourt's ecological buildings and sun and wind sculptures, (2) the front entrance with a book corner with informative literature, (3) the west gallery's tunnel with images depicting the negative consequences of contemporary industrial society and the relationship between developing and industrialised countries, (4) the main hall dominated by a huge construction, a "populated sculpture" that represented the potential for a developed urban society in contact with nature and the people, (5) the east gallery's display of existing and future technological facilities for environmentally friendly power generation, (6) the study hall's material for in-depth research, (7 and 8) indoor and outdoor workshops where children and grow-ups were encouraged to create their own images and objects to depict their impressions and increase awareness, and (9) the museum's cinema where a very ambitious seminar series was held over the course of the exhibition.
- 18 Lennart Mörk, statements in the booklet *Ararat*, Stockholm June 1976, p. 5. The original with English and Italian text.
- 19 One of the most determined and radical attempts to place the function of visual arts in direct relationship to the prevailing political and social order was made in the Soviet Union in the 1920s. Using manifestos, exhibitions and artistic education, an anti-essentialist position was formulated whereby art was subordinated to politics, at the expense of the demise of bourgeois "theological, metaphysical and mystifying" art: where the engineer and artist come closer together and put their services at the disposal of Soviet society, and where there is no longer place for the artwork as an individual, subjectivist or temporary goal in and of itself. See for example Alexei Gan, "Constructivism" (1922) and Boris Arvatov, "Art and Class" (1923), *The Tradition of Constructivism*, ed. Stephen Bann, The Documents of 20th-Century Art, New York 1974, p. 33ff, and p. 47. This question, however, gave rise to a series of affected debates at the start of the 1920s. Christina Lodder has pointed out a specific historical turning point in the Soviet art scene of the 1920s that captures this ambivalence, in a debate that was conducted within the Institute of Artistic Culture (INKhUK) in 1921. It dealt with the issue of whether to understand visual art as composition or construction, and where the dividing line concerned whether art's basic function in socialist society was aesthetic or utilitarian in nature. Christina Lodder, *Russian Constructivism*, New Haven/London 1985, p. 83.
- 20 The Stockholm Exhibition's functionalist programme generated massive criticism from certain quarters, at the same time that there was dissatisfaction among some of the exhibition's organisers that its presentation was not purely functionalist enough. In this context one can see Gunnar Asplund, Wolter Gahn, Sven Markelius, Gregor Paulsson, Eskil Sundahl and Uno Åhrén's publication *Acceptera*, Stockholm 1931, as a manifesto where the reasoning from the exhibition is refined and where the arguments are radicalised and broadened. The question about the functionalist form is seen here in direct relation to the modernisation of society.
- 21 *Ararat* 1976, p. 5.
- 22 Pontus Hultén, *Rörelse i konsten* (exh. cat.), ed. Pontus Hultén, Moderna Museet, Stockholm 1961, unpaginated.
- 23 Pontus Hultén, "Kort framställning av rörelsekonstens historia under 1900-talet", *Rörelse i konsten* 1961, unpaginated.
- 24 Pontus Hultén, "Collage eller fantastiska realiteter", *Kasark*, no. 3, 1958, unpaginated.
- 25 Pontus Hultén, "Den ställföreträdande friheten eller Om Rörelse i konsten och Tinguelys Metamekanik", *Kasark*, no. 2, 1955, p. 1.
- 26 Pontus Hultén, "Mouvement – Temps ou les quatre dimensions de la plastique cinétique", *Le Mouvement*, Galerie Denise René, Paris 1955, unpaginated.
- 27 Pontus Hultén, *Rörelse i konsten* 1961, unpaginated.
- 28 Pontus Hultén, "Avslutande inledning", *Den inre och den yttre rummen*

- (exh. cat.), eds. Karin Bergqvist Lindegren and Pontus Hultén, Moderna Museet, Stockholm 1965, unpaginated.
- 29 Allan Kaprow, "The Legacy of Jackson Pollock", *ArtNews*, vol. 57, no. 6, 1958, p. 57.
  - 30 Eugen Wretholm describes in a review of the 1950s how informal art and other radical expressions were not shown at the leading galleries but "in small often unknown exhibition spaces", see "Från konkretism till informell akademism", *Ord och bild*, vol. 70, no. 4, 1961, p. 315.
  - 31 In Sweden the exhibition was organised in collaboration with Nationalmuseum and Riksförbundet för bildande konst. Here various directions within contemporary American art were presented in an arrangement by the American State Department and the Museum of Modern Art in New York that was going on tour around Europe. Here figurative art by artists such as Edward Hopper, Ben Shan and Stuart Davis were shown, but also sculptures by Alexander Calder and David Smith, as well as a few paintings by Arshile Gorky and Jackson Pollock. See Andrew Carnduff Ritchie, "Orientering", *Tolv nutida amerikanska målare och skulptörer* 1953, pp. 9–11. The touring exhibition *Kring spontanismen* was organized by Riksförbundet för bildande konst in 1959. The exhibition was shown at Malmö Museum, Värmlands Museum in Karlstad, Konsthallen in Göteborg, Zornmuseet in Mora and Konstakademien in Stockholm. The exhibition presented works by European artists like Torsten Andersson, Karel Appel, François Arnal, Alberto Burri, Gianni Dova, Jean Dubuffet, Inger Ekdahl, Öyvind Fahlström, Hans Hartung, Asger Jorn, André Masson, Georges Mathieu, Henri Michaux and Antoni Tàpies. Because of difficulties in getting loans and high insurance premiums no works by American abstract expressionists were shown. See Lars Erik Åström's foreword, *Kring spontanismen* (exh. cat.), ed. Lars Erik Åström, Riksförbundet för bildande konst, Stockholm 1959, unpaginated.
  - 32 See for example Gotthard Johansson, *Svenska Dagbladet* 24 Nov. 1953; Nils Palmgren, *Arbetsbladet* 24 Nov. 1953; Yngve Berg, *Dagens Nyheter* 24 Nov. 1953; Alf Liedholm, *Upsala Nya Tidning* 15 Dec. 1953. Several critics, however, felt that this exhibition proved that American art could no longer be ignored, and they emphasised its individualism and vitality, as well as its experimental spirit. The interest was mainly directed toward sculpture and figurative art. An exception to this negative stance, however, was the young Pontus Hultén's thorough presentation of abstract expressionism: "En ny expressionism", *Dagens Nyheter* 1 Dec. 1953.
  - 33 See Kristian Romare, *Sydsvenska Dagbladet* 2 April 1959; Marianne Nanne-Bråhammar, *Arbetet* 5 April 1959; Thorild Anderberg, *Kvällsposten* 13 April 1959; signaturen NthJ., *Nya Wermlands-Tidningen* 28 May 1959; Gilbert Svenson, *Värmlands Folkblad* 29 May 1959; Birger Eriksson, *Dala Demokraten* 10 June 1959; Gösta Andrén, *Ny Tid* 11 June 1959; Bengt Abrahamson, *Göteborgs Tidningen* 13 June 1959; Ulf Linde, *Dagens Nyheter* 25 Aug. 1959; Alf Liedholm, *Upsala Nya Tidning* 26 Aug. 1959; Per-Olov Zennström, *Ny Dag* 28 Aug. 1959; Ulf Hård af Segerstad, *Svenska Dagbladet* 28 Aug. 1959.
  - 34 Thorild Anderberg, "Reflexion över en yta", *Kvällsposten* 13 April 1959.
  - 35 Kristian Romare, "Ett nytt klimat", *Sydsvenska Dagbladet* 2 April 1959.
  - 36 Ulf Linde, *Spejare. En essä om konst*, Gothenburg 1960/1984, p. 45. See also Marcel Duchamp, "The Creative Act", *The New Art. A Critical Anthology*, ed. Gregory Battcock, New York 1966, p. 25f.
  - 37 Torsten Bergmark, "Är konsten en förbrukningsvara?", *Dagens Nyheter* 22 Sept. 1962. A selection of the contributions in this debate have been collected in *Är allting konst? Inlägg i den stora konstdebatten*, ed. Hans Hederberg, Stockholm 1963.
  - 38 Pontus Hultén, "Moderna museet svarar", *Dagens Nyheter* 22 Sept. 1962. Ulf Linde made the following contribution to the debate: "Svar på akademital", *Dagens Nyheter* 18 Sept. 1962; "Kritikern som eternell", *Dagens Nyheter* 29 Sept. 1962; "Andra sätt att se", *Dagens Nyheter* 25 Nov. 1962.
  - 39 Leif Nylén, *Den öppna konsten. Happenings, instrumentell teater, konkret poesi och andra gränsöverskridningar i det svenska 60-talet*, Stockholm 1998, p. 18.
  - 40 Lars Nittve, "Preface", *Implosion. A Postmodern Perspective* (exh. cat.), ed. Lars Nittve, Moderna Museet, Stockholm 1987, p. 14, 18.
  - 41 The indecisiveness and strong emotions were reflected in the debate that flared up just before *Implosion*, in connection with Lars O. Ericsson's introduction of a postmodernist aesthetic in *Dagens Nyheter* 1987 ("Till försvar för 80-talets konst", *Dagens Nyheter* 27 Sept. 1987 and "I symbolernas rike", *Dagens Nyheter* 29 Sept. 1987). The articles set off a debate whose harsh tone was in many ways reminiscent of the "Great Art Debate" of 1962. To an equal extent, the debate was also a symptom of the ongoing contest for the prerogative of interpretation in the Swedish art scene. Ericsson had the last word and summed up the debate in "Jaget är kultur, inte sann natur", *Dagens Nyheter* 25 Nov. 1987, and could then refer to *Implosion*, which had been open for a month. Thus, the debate preceded the exhibition, but both of them together came to constitute a powerful introduction of postmodernism into the Swedish art scene.
  - 42 This comparison springs from a chart that Ihab Hassan put up in order to make a general comparison between modernist and postmodernist aesthetics. "Mot ett begrepp om postmodernismen" (1982), *Postmoderna tider?*, eds. Mikael Löfgren and Anders Molander, Stockholm 1986, p. 70f.
  - 43 Lars Nittve, "Preface", *Implosion* 1987, p. 34.
  - 44 Craig Owens, "From Work to Frame, or, Is There Life After 'The Death of the Author'?", *Implosion* 1987, p. 200.
  - 45 Craig Owens, "Allan McCollum: Repetition & Difference" (1983), *Beyond Recognition. Representation, Power, and Culture*, eds. Scott Byron, Barbara Kruger, Lynne Tillman and Jane Weinstock, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London 1992/1997, p. 118ff.
  - 46 Lars Nittve, "Introduction: From Implosion to Trans/Mission", *Trans/Mission. Art in Intercultural Limbo* (exh. cat.), ed. Lars Nittve, Roseum, Malmö 1991, p. 7.
  - 47 David Elliott, "No Pain No Gain", *Wounds. Between Democracy and Redemption in Contemporary Art* (exh. cat.), eds. David Elliott and Pier Luigi Tazzi, Moderna Museet, Stockholm 1998, p. 11f, 15.
  - 48 Lars Nittve, "Nowhere but Nowhere", *Now/Here*, vol. I, Louisiana Museum for Moderne Kunst, Louisiana Revy, vol. 36, no. 3, 1996, p. 10f.
  - 49 Germano Celant, "Subject in Short Circuit", *Implosion* 1987, p. 174.
  - 50 Ibid., p. 174.
  - 51 Alain Cuffe, "Ransom/Redemption", *Wounds* 1998, p. 60f.
  - 52 See Jean Baudrillard, "Pop – An Art of Consumption?" (1970), *Post-Pop*, ed. Paul Taylor, Cambridge, Massachusetts 1989.
  - 53 Thomas Crow, *Modern Art in Common Culture*, New Haven/London 1996, p. 63.
  - 54 Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real. The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century*, Cambridge, Massachusetts/London 1996, p. 132.

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