

Art Hub : Newsletter #23 : November 2022



INTRODUKTION

Kære læser, i september kunne man i et hjørne af vores vinduesparti på Halmtorvet se værket Measures against Mass af Laurits Gulløv. Værket var en del af udstillingsserien THE ONES WHO EXIST DESPITE OF OR BECAUSE OF OR INSTEAD OF OR AFTER THE FACT OF kurateret af Arrange the Ants. Measures against Mass bestod af en skulptur af forstørrede centicubes beboet af levende snegle. Under udstillingen skrev Gulløv løbende noter om værket og dets udvikling. Til dette nyhedsbrev har han redigeret et udvalg af disse noter. Rigtig god læselyst.

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INTRODUCTION

Dear Reader, during September the corner window at Art Hub Copenhagen was occupied by the work Measures against Mass by Laurits Gulløv. The work was part of the exhibition series THE ONES WHO EXIST DESPITE OF OR BECAUSE OF OR INSTEAD OF OR AFTER THE FACT OF curated by Arrange the Ants. Measures against Mass consisted of a sculpture made of enlarged centicubes inhabited by live slugs. During the exhibition Laurits Gulløv took notes on the work and its evolution. For this newsletter Gulløv has edited a selection of these notes. Happy reading.



3) Jeg har installeret et lysstofrør i toppen af kassen og lavet en låge i bagsiden. Når jeg åbner den for at kigge ind til sneglene, ser jeg igennem ruden ud på gaden. I aften følte det, som om det var gaden der så ind på mig, og jeg tænkte, at det var som om terrariet havde skiftet side med mørket.

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In the top section of the box, I have installed a fluorescent tube, and I have made a hatch in the back of the box. When I open it to take a look at the slugs, I look out onto the street through the windowpane. Last night, it felt like the street was looking back at me and I was thinking that it was as if the terrarium had switched sides with the darkness.

Photo: Laurits Gulløv.

NOTER TIL SNEGLE

Af Laurits Gulløv

3) Jeg har installeret et lysstofrør i toppen af kassen og lavet en låge i bagsiden. Når jeg åbner den for at kigge ind til sneglene, ser jeg igennem ruden ud på gaden. I aftes føltes det, som om det var gaden der så ind på mig, og jeg tænkte, at det var som om terrariet havde skiftet side med mørket.

7) Sneglene har rykket sig rundt i løbet af natten. Nogle har bevæget sig op ad kassens sider, andre ligger dovent i salatbladene bag den største skulptur. De virker til at have forskellige temperamenter, nogle nysgerrige, andre mere resignerede med tendens til at gå i stå. Jeg har fordelt salatbladene, så de mest stillestående snegle har mad indenfor rækkevidde.

10) Sneglene liver op, når jeg sprayer vand rundt i kassen. Først trækker de følehornene til sig, så strækker de dem nysgerrigt ud som søvndrukne tegneseriefignurer. Med følehornene fremme, får sneglene en slags ansigter, der gør dem mere relaterbare. Når luftfugtigheden falder, trækker de følehornene til sig igen og ligger rundtomkring i kassen som små ubevægelige klumper, der hverken har for eller bag.

13) Jeg er bekymret for om de spiser nok. Jeg har spredt jord og plantet karse i bunden af kassen. Sneglene ser ud til at trives med det.

21) I morges hørte jeg en underlig dump lyd, mens jeg fordelte salat i kassen: En snegl havde tilsyneladende uprovokeret møffet sig udover en kant og var faldet ned på kassebunden. Det slog mig, at lyden var enestående, at sneglenes verden er fuldstændig tavs.

22) Dér, hvor ørerne sidder på et pattedyr, har skovsnegle åndehuller, som udvider og trækker sig sammen. Jeg tror, vi rangerer levende væsener efter hvor mange menneskelige træk de har. At have et ansigt er et menneskeligt træk, at kunne høre og sige lyde er et andet.

27) Kassen sneglene bor i, er en mellemting mellem et terrarie og en white cube. Som terrarie er dens funktion at holde sneglene inde, som white cube at holde omgivelserne ude. Jeg sidder i solen og spekulerer over om det er det samme.

33) I en kultur, der har så få flygtige berøringer med ustyret liv, er det måske nødvendigt at hegne det inde for at fastholde, hvad det egentlig er?

35) Fra gaden ligner karsen et skovklædt miniaturelandskab. Sneglene sidder og hygger sig på ruden hvor de har tegnet snørklede spor i nattens kondens.

40) Til udstillingen har vi fået lavet en pasningsmanual. Den blev udarbejdet dels som guide, dels for at kunne forsikre eventuelle kritikere om, at sneglene bliver passet forsvarligt. Jeg har spekuleret over om der findes en principiel etisk grænse mellem at benytte dyr i udstillingsregi og at have et kæledyr? Om dyr i kunst bare er kategorisk no go uanset i hvilken rolle?

47) En af sneglene har lagt æg.

51) I går faldt jeg over en gammel norsk tabloidforside: "Invasjon! Slik blir du kvitt mordersneglen" stod der. Hvad sker der, tænkte jeg,

for alle øgenavnene? Mordersnegl, dræbersnegl - selv på latin har den fået det meget lidt neutrale Arion Vulgaris. Jeg tror øgenavnene har til formål at distancere dyret, og vende problemet udad: Vi bragte selv sneglen hertil som blind passager i den globale varetransport, og dens efterfølgende udbredelse skyldes især, at de arter der kunne holde den i skak, er marginaliserede af monokulturer og rullegræs. Måske er dens mest markante træk ikke at den dræber eller er klam, men at den ikke afhænger af specifikke økosystemer, og i en verden, hvor kredsløbene er grundlæggende i skred, er det vel, det ypperste en art kan opnå?

56) Klimaet i kassen føles tropisk. Der er vokset en svamp op i resterne af en karsebakke. Jeg plejer at tælle dem, men i dag mangler jeg to.

58) Den amerikanske antropolog Anna Tsing, introducerer i sin tænkning begrebet Nonsoels, (nonsocial landscape elements) om elementer der eksisterer uden forbindelser til noget andet, sådan at de frit kan flyttes rundt, skaleres op i omfang og derved lettere udnyttes. Dette, mener hun, er selve fundamentet for den globale supply-chain-kapitalisme. Jeg synes, det er svært ikke at relatere denne tanke til hvide ensartede rum ment til at isolere kunstværker fra deres omverden, sådan at de derved frit kan teleporteres rundt mellem whitecube-portaler uden at forandre sig.

64) Der er begyndt at danne sig mycelium i jorden. Sneglene har ædt og nedbrudt en stor del af karsen og de nye karsefrø vil ikke spire i den seje snegleslim. Fugten hænger i luften og alt er blevet loddent og mugagtigt.

74) Økosystemet, der har udspillet sig i kassen over de sidste tre uger, er ved at kollapse eller i hvert fald ved at transformere sig til noget helt andet. Det er sidste aften i udstillingsperioden. Jeg sidder bag kassen og tænker over noget, som måske kan fungere som en slags afsluttende note: Et kunstværk er et knudepunkt af forbindelser mellem mennesker, steder og materialiter, men er ofte udstillet i rum indrettet specifikt til at skære disse forbindelser væk, sådan at der bliver plads til nye tolkninger, associationer og læsninger. Whitecube-kunsten lever på den præmis, at et knudepunkt kan skilles fra sine forbindelser og stadig være et knudepunkt. Et levende dyr er også et knudepunkt, men kan ikke isoleres uden synligt at mistrives. Hvis dyr i kunst er no go, er det måske fordi den kunst, vi her taler om, er konstrueret til at se fænomener som uafhængige enheder og ikke som myriader af kredsløb, der interagerer med hinanden. Den fiktion, at noget bare findes i sig selv, tror jeg blotlægges, når levende dyr importeres til kunstrum. I morgen piller jeg kassen ned.



22) Dér, hvor ørerne sidder på et pattedyr, har skovsnegle åndehuller, som udvider og trækker sig sammen. Jeg tror, vi rangerer levende væsener efter hvor mange menneskelige træk de har. At have et ansigt er et menneskeligt træk, at kunne høre og sige lyde er et andet.

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There, where the ears are positioned on a mammal, slugs have respiratory pores that dilate and contract. It seems to me that we rank living creatures according to how many anthropomorphic traits they possess. Having a face is one anthropomorphic trait. Being able to hear and being able to utter sounds are others.

Photo: Laurits Gulløv.

NOTES ON SLUGS

By Laurits Gulløv

3) In the top section of the box, I have installed a fluorescent tube, and I have made a hatch in the back of the box. When I open it to take a look at the slugs, I look out onto the street through the windowpane. Last night, it felt like the street was looking back at me and I was thinking that it was as if the terrarium had switched sides with the darkness.

7) In the course of the night, the slugs have been moving around. Some of them have slithered their way up along the sides of the box, while others are lying indolently in the lettuce leaves behind the largest of the sculptures. The slugs appear to have differing temperaments: some of them are curious, while others appear to be more resigned, with a tendency to grind to a halt. I have distributed the lettuce leaves in such a way that the most sedentary of the slugs have food within reach.

10) The slugs become enlivened when I spray water around inside the box. At first, they draw the retractable tentacles into themselves. Then they extend them out, curiously, like somnolent cartoon characters. With their tentacles pointing forward, the slugs appear to take on faces, of a kind, faces that render them more relatable. When the humidity falls, they draw their tentacles back into themselves once again and lie around on all sides of the box, like small motionless blobs that have neither front sides nor back sides.

13) I am worried about whether they're eating enough. I have spread soil and planted garden cress at the bottom of the box. The slugs appear to be thriving with this set-up.

21) This morning, I heard a peculiar dull thud as I was distributing lettuce inside the box: apparently unprovoked, one of the slugs had maneuvered its way over an edge and had fallen down onto the bottom of the box. What struck me was that the sound was unparallelled, that the slugs' world is altogether silent.

22) There, where the ears are positioned on a mammal, slugs have respiratory pores that dilate and contract. It seems to me that we rank living creatures according to how many anthropomorphic traits they possess. Having a face is one anthropomorphic trait. Being able to hear and being able to utter sounds are others.

27) The box in which the slugs are living is something between a terrarium and a white cube. As a terrarium, its function is to keep the slugs inside; as a white cube, its function is to keep the surroundings out. I'm sitting in the sunshine and speculating on whether these are actually one and the same.

33) In a culture that has so few fleeting moments of contact with uncontrolled life, might it be necessary to fence this in, in order to insist on what it really is?

35) From the street, the garden cress appears as a miniature forest-covered landscape. The slugs are busy enjoying themselves and feeling at home on the windowpane, where they have delineated ornate trails in the night's condensation.

40) For the exhibition, we had somebody help us make a manual advising how to take proper care of the slugs. This was prepared and elaborated partly as a guide and partly in order to be able to appease any possible critics who might have concerns about the

slugs' well being during the exhibition period. I have been wondering whether there is any fundamental ethical boundary between bringing animals into play for exhibition purposes and owning a pet? Whether animals in art are simply a categorical "no go", regardless of what role they are playing?

47) One of the slugs has laid eggs.

51) Yesterday, I came across the front page of an old Norwegian tabloid, where the blurb reads: "Invasjon! Slik blir du kvitt mordersneglen" [Invasion! This is how you get rid of the murdering slug]. And I was stirred to ask, what's up with all the nicknames? Murdering slug. Killer slug. Even in Latin, the creature has been christened with the ever so slightly neutral *Arion Vulgaris*. I think that these nicknames have the purpose of placing this animal at some distance and inverting the problem: after all, it was we, ourselves, who brought the Spanish slug here, as a stowaway in the global transport of commodities, and its subsequent proliferation has mainly been due to the fact that those species which could keep the spread of the slug in check have been marginalized by monocultures and instant turf. Maybe the Spanish slug's most distinctive feature is neither that it kills nor that it happens to be disgusting to us, but that it doesn't depend on any specific ecosystems, and in a world where the circuits are fundamentally subsiding, isn't it so that this might be the very best any given species can achieve?

56) The climate inside the box feels tropical. A fungus has sprouted forth in the remnants of a garden cress tray. I am accustomed to counting the slugs, but today I'm missing two of them.

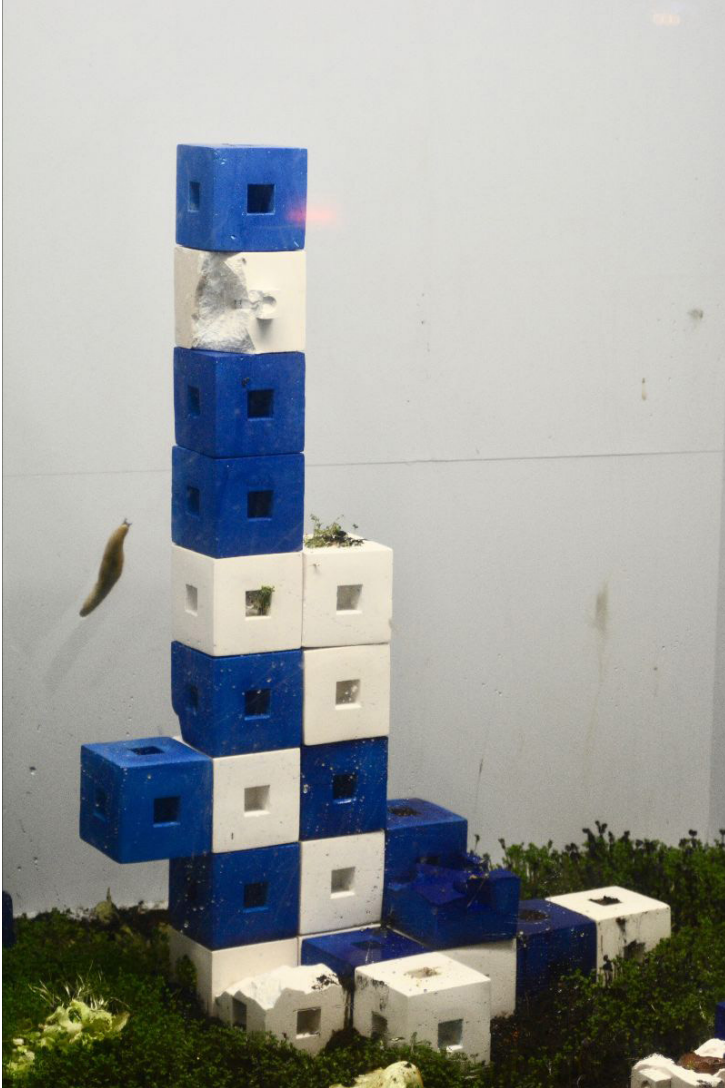
58) In laying out her train of thought, the American anthropologist Anna Tsing, introduces the concept of Nonsoels (nonsocial landscape elements) in order to describe elements that exist without connections to anything else, in such a way that they can freely be moved around, scaled up in proportions and accordingly be exploited more easily. It is this, Tsing believes, that constitutes the very foundation of global supply-chain capitalism. I find it hard to resist relating this line of thought to white uniform spaces that are supposed to isolate artworks from their surroundings, so that the artworks in question can thereby be teleported freely around between white cube portals without ever being influenced by the surroundings.

64) Mycelium has started to colonize in the soil. The slugs have eaten and broken down a considerable portion of the garden cress and the new cress seeds are not germinating in the viscous slime secreted by the slugs. Moisture hangs in the air, and everything has become furry and musty.

74) The ecosystem that has been unfolding inside the box over the past three weeks is about to collapse or, in any event, is about to transform into something completely different. It is the final evening of the exhibition period and I'm sitting behind the box, thinking about something that might be able to serve as a kind of concluding note: A work of art is a node of various connections among people, places and materialities, but it is often being exhibited inside spaces that have been designed specifically for the purpose of cutting away these connections, with the intended result that room is being made for new interpretations, associations and readings. White cube art exists on the premise that a nodal point can be separated from its connections and still be a nodal point. A living animal is also a nodal point but it cannot be isolated without visibly withering away. If animals in art are a "no go", maybe this is because the art

we are talking about here has been constructed for the purpose of seeing phenomena as independent entities and not as myriads of circuits that are interacting with one another. The fiction that something simply exists in itself is, I dare say, being exposed when living animals are imported into art spaces. Tomorrow, I will dismantle the box.

Translation by Dan A. Marmorstein



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35) Fra gaden ligner karsen et skovklædt miniaturlandskab. Sneglene sidder og hygger sig på ruden hvor de har tegnet snørklede spor i nattens kondens.

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Photo: Laurits Gulløv.

KALENDER

CALENDAR

Art Hub Copenhagen : Art + Architecture : New methods for big challenges : Interview with Jacob Lillemose : 18.11.2022 : 16.30–18.00

Art Hub Copenhagen : Free Lunch Series : Alexandra Hunts & Madeleine Noraas : 22.11.2022 : 12.00–13.30

Art Hub Residency : Performance : Blessed be the witch_es : Vala T. Foltyn & Maja Chiara Faber : 24.11.2022 : 19.00–21.00

Art Hub Copenhagen : WORKSHOP FOR AESTHETICHS - Dialouges in Praxis #4 : 29.11.2022 : 18.30–20.30

Art Hub Copenhagen : Guilt & Debts : Becomings : Talk : Aqqalu Berthelsen og Julie Edel Hardenberg : 30.11.2022 : 17.00–19.00 :
More information to come.

Art Hub Residency : Performance : (Co)Opulence Collective : 01.12.2022 : 19.00-21.00 :
More information to come.

Art Hub Film Club : Presented by Jane Jin Kaisen : Community of Parting & special surprise screening : 07.12.2022 : 19.00–21.00

Art Hub Residency : Margarita del Carmen : 08.12.2022 : More information to come.

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