

Bus Riders – second meeting

As we all know, a piece of art can be appreciated on several different levels and be interpreted variously depending on the viewer's previous knowledge, experiences and state of mind. Bus Riders' second meeting was devoted to the topic of references and the way in which art makes meaning or is interpreted. The discussion was moderated by Ronald Jones, Professor of Experience Design at Konstfack and included the participation of three established Swedish artists, Kristina Jansson, Meriç Algün Ringborg and Miriam Bäckström. The discussed touched on among other things, the origin of art the artists' inspiration, their view on their own art and their respective artistic tools.

Excerpts from the debate

Ronald Jones introduced the topic by explaining the crucial difference between identifying the subject of a work of art (iconography) and the interpretation of a work of art (iconology). The example given was described as someone admiring a painting depicting a young bearded man in a blue robe walking on water while 12 astonished men in a boat watch him do the impossible. Someone new to art tells an art historian the admiration she holds for the painting and as she continues to describe the painting to him, the art historian can finish describing it before she finished trying to do so. The art historian than responds with the question; "And the young bearded man in the blue robe, did he have a halo?" "Yes!", cries out the newcomer. This conversation only describes the subject of

the painting (A scene from the Life of Christ) but tells us nothing about the interpretation of its meaning. The interpretation or iconology of the painting has to do with the promise of miracles (walking on water, life after death) arising from Christian Theology.

With the backdrop of this distinction in hand, each artist gave a brief introduction about their own work, and what subjects they chose.

Visual artist **Kristina Jansson** lives and works in Stockholm. She is represented by the Andréhn-Schiptjenko Gallery and her work is featured at the Museum of Modern Art (Moderna Museet) in Stockholm. Kristina's imagery is characterised by a contrast between light and darkness and she is often inspired by other types of art such as photography, film and text.

Meriç Algün Ringborg, originally from Istanbul, interprets, among other things, the bureaucracy behind migration, in her art. She employs various media including audio, video, installation, printed matter and photography. Her main themes are nationality, borders, translation, bureaucracy and the concept of "home". Her current inspiration for her upcoming solo show at Nordenhake is the literary word and more specifically dictionaries.

Miriam Bäckström emerged as an artist in the late 90s. Miriam has worked with a various set of artistic media such as film, performance, photography, installation, objects, and text. She uses these tools in telling the story of different *characters*.



Despite the variation of subject in their work, Miriam Bäckström with the creation of make-believe characters, Meriç Algün Ringborg by mapping the injustice of social systems, and Kristina Jansson through the collage of architectural scenes in a way that deferred interpretation, there were strong correlations between them. When asked what their art meant, or how it was to be interpreted there was unanimous agreement amongst the artists that this was nothing for them to determine alone but rather the interpretation was a matter of co-creation between the artist and viewer. None of the three artists felt that their works required a pre-conditioned knowledge of the social, political or literary references in order to be viewed or enjoyed nor do our interpretation is in tune with the artist's own ideas about the piece.

Moreover the artists were the least sure about what meaning their art makes and that they probably would not know for sometime; only after history intervened would the larger meaning be revealed.

The afterthought the audience was left with on a final note by Ronald Jones is whether the artist is not in an inferior position to the collector when it comes to influencing. For instance did any single artist from the Renaissance have as much influence on history and making meaning as the Medici Family through their left-behind collection?

