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‘Unwoven World: Beyond the Pliable Plane’

Opening reception: 9 April 2014
Exhibition dates: 10 April–22 June 2014
Opening hours: Thursdays and Fridays from 3–7pm;
Saturdays and Sundays from 12–7pm (closed on 20 April)

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'Unwoven World: Beyond the Pliable Plane' presents the works of Norwegian artists Brit Fuglevaag, Elisabeth Haarr and Sidsel Paaske, who in the 1970s explored the domestic sphere and the everyday consumer object. These artists engaged in an intensive quest for a return to traditional crafts, emphasising the profound need to explore alternative creative modes, systems and media. Using weaving techniques, textiles and seriality, they insisted on the communicative role of the two-dimensional surface as one that moves beyond the mere picture. Paralleling their concerns with those of the early weavers, they contested the role of the new electronic media, both in the private and the public spheres.

The catalysts of heated debates about the role of artists within society Fuglevaag, Haarr and Paaske aimed to challenge the means deemed appropriate to the creation of a work of art, as well as question the values that place that art in the public realm. Presenting some of their key works, some of which have never been seen publically before, the exhibition 'Unwoven World: Beyond the Pliable Plane' aims to function as an index of a historic genealogy, reactivated through the performativity of words, texts and concerts. On the occasion of this exhibition OCA also presents the first English translation of Paaske's poem *Indigo*, originally published in 1979.

'Unwoven World: Beyond the Pliable Plane' marks the completion of the programme 'Fashion: the Fall of an Industry', a series of 10 lectures held at OCA in the autumn of 2013 and listed in full at the end of this publication. The lectures analysed the decline of the textile industry during the 1970s in Norway as well as artistic reaction to and reflection upon the unforeseen aspects of industrialisation, the need to care for environmental and working conditions, and the social impact experienced through the outsourcing of production. The exhibition is also accompanied by a selection of Alexander Kluge's eclectic collection of 'raw materials', a series of television programmes assembling photographs, drawings, diagrams and diverse footage considering the capacity of fantasy to organise individual experience, amidst the significant impact of electronic media.

'Unwoven World: Beyond the Pliable Plane' was conceived by OCA's Antonio Cataldo, with the contributions of various OCA team members: support and advice by Toril Fjelde Høye, research and coordination by Henrietta Taube, assistance by Anne Charlotte Hauen and guidance by Katya García-Antón.

Katya Garcia-Anton
Director
Office for Contemporary Art Norway

PROLEGOMENA TO AN UNWOVEN WORLD: SIDSEL PAASKE, ELISABETH HAARR, BRIT FUGLEVAAG

Antonio Cataldo

Though they still protect us today against the weather in the form of clothes in our regular settled form of life, they no longer provide us with shelter except in our spell of nomadism, as tourists or warriors. With the discontinuance of this one major function textiles moved indoors, inside our habitations.
— Anni Albers, *On Designing* (1959)

The tendencies of the consciousness and programming industry, advertising, the publicity campaigns of firms and administrative apparatuses have altogether different roots. These – along with the advanced production process – overlay, as new public spheres of production, the classical public sphere.
— Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, *Public Sphere and Experience* (1972)

It is the invisible I wish to display. I release the image onto the dark film of the retina, let it lie in acid, or I burn it at 1000 degrees centigrade and I release it afterwards. From the outside and in and then out again: a process. A greater process, from the first to the last image: from the meticulous to the unrestrained, from the fierce, the brutal to the quiet and stress-relieved, from the melancholy to the happy and playful … everything from the human terrain. A walk through a versatile, varied landscape, in all types of weather, in all seasons I have walked. Sometimes on a path, sometimes not. Sometimes alone, sometimes not. On stones, mire, moss, soil, sand and heather. Just like hard and soft material. On ice and snow, in water.
— Sidsel Paaske, undated

In 1957, Anni Albers drew attention to a lost coalition between architecture and textiles, which had in nomadic times been identified with the same purpose – to provide shelter – but had become separated in a settled life devoid of wandering, when architecture pursued the grounded, the fixed, the permanent.[1] When textiles were brought indoors, it transformed their protective role.[2] According to Albers, 'flexibility, pliability' and a 'high degree of performance'[3] could establish a renewed alliance of textiles with the architectural space, and they could potentially become integral architectural elements once again, since functionalist architecture had already demonstrated how effectively this was achieved when they were used as walls and banners.

The modern idea of the inter-changeability between the human figure and interior spaces, where dress patterns matched the design of the domestic interior, established a continuity of design in the bourgeois space of architecture.

Meanwhile, with its weightless simplification of the architectural interior and exterior,[4] the boulevard was becoming a distinctive sign of nineteenth-century urbanism, thus making it impossible to separate the domestic from the social sphere. Walter Benjamin in *The Arcades Project* described the nineteenth-century bourgeois interior as a hard shell lined with velvet, in which the complete retreat from the outside world was the ideal – meaning, paradoxically, that by the middle of the nineteenth century the blurring of conventional boundaries between inside space and the outside world had become commonplace. He argued that the burgeoning French middle class had collapsed nearly all aspects of experience into the interior, seeking even to interiorise gardens and public, non-domestic spaces. The interior possessed both phantasmagoric and ritualistic qualities, the threshold symbolising an entry point into the potentially enchanted space of the inside. For Benjamin, transparency, as pursued by Haussmann's urbanistic ideal for Paris "put an end to dwelling in the old sense". In his analysis, the interior space became an extension of Haussmann's perspectival views down long street-vistas. "It corresponded to the tendency, which was noticeable again and again during the nineteenth century, to ennoble technical exigencies with artistic aims. The institutions of the worldly and spiritual rule of the bourgeoisie, set in the frame of the boulevards, were to find their apotheosis. Before their completion, boulevards were covered over with tarpaulins, and unveiled like monuments."[5]

In Benjamin's view of modernity, progress is connected to the idea of catastrophe. He treats this idea dialectically in *The Arcades Project*, proposing a social regression, as opposed to human progress, under the aegis of a certain technological progress. The compulsion is set in motion by the structures of commodity production, with the eternal return of the ever-same. This is the catastrophic experience. Ruin and devastation recur not only as a motif, but also as historical fact, a natural and social phenomenon in *The Arcades Project*. He makes several references, for example, to Pompeii, as he does in a children's radio lecture on the demise of Herculanum and Pompeii, where he speaks of the ashes nestling in the creases of garments, the curves of ears and lips, between fingers, strands of hair, which solidified before the bodies decomposed, so that we possess today a series of faithful imprints of these individuals.[6] The volcano is a particular mode of destruction, acting like a snapshot of an otherwise ungraspable history.

SATELLITES, SCREENS AND EAGLES

On 20 July 1969, the sight of the first human being to walk on the Moon – transmitted on television screens all over the world – marked a 'sublime' vision that was not matched by the blurry images brought back to the awaiting Earth. Neil Armstrong announced the lunar module's safe landing on the 'powdered charcoal' surface with the words: "The Eagle has landed", continuing with the famous phrase: "That's one small step for man; one giant leap for mankind." For the US, this universal message, coming as it did at the end of the turbulent 1960s, functioned as a brief antidote to a tumultuous

decade that had seen the assassination of President Kennedy, the lurching of the Civil Rights movement from triumph to despair with the killing of Martin Luther King, and the spreading blaze of race riots, urban decline and the upheaval and trauma of the Vietnam War at its peak.

"Has man's conquest of space increased or diminished his stature?",[7] is the question with which Hannah Arendt opens an essay of 1963,[8] whose rhetoric aimed at evaluating the 'imperialist' desire of man to colonise as large a 'territory' as possible. The hubristic aspiration of liberating oneself from terrestrial space, in a century privileging the primacy of science over the human, forces a call, she suggests, for more humanist concerns. Modern science, she argues, has changed and reconstructed the world in which we live, perhaps at the expense of our common sense of human communication in everyday language, putting the human 'out of touch with reality'.[9] The invasion of the space of the universe, against the backdrop of the conquest of terrestrial space through the most advanced technological instruments, has released other spaces for observing our relation to terrestrial conditions, by appealing to the power of imagination and abstraction, which would, as it were, "lift the human mind out of the gravitational field of the earth and look down upon it from some point in the universe".[10] For, to do our limited job of exploring our own surroundings in the universe, "we have to leave the world of our senses and of our bodies not only in imagination but in reality".[11] The launch of 'manned space carriers' – so that man himself would go where previously only human imagination and its power of abstraction could reach – carried us from our Earthbound home into a cosmic space of theoretical perplexities and a new physical worldview. The modern scientific enterprise, which began with Copernicus, moved the centre beyond the Earth. But with the loss of a geocentric and anthropomorphic conception of the world, science also lost its natural evaluation of the stature of man.

The space flights that generated the image of the Earth from outer space in an era of war and social protest, an age of the mass-mediated primacy of science and technology, were part of an era of decolonisation and neocolonialism, under the perceived threat of nuclear and ecological destruction, and the operations of multinational, consumer capitalism. In a time of such flux, a new perspective on the Earth might have meant a victory for science, but instead, an unconscionable squandering of effort and resources pervaded, triggering huge terrestrial problems. This shift from the realm of nature to the infinity of space, according to Arendt, forces us to examine once again the actions of man, which constitute political life, public and private space, the spaces of appearance, the inner space of the life of the mind, and outer space.

A self-taught artist, as she declared herself – since she had learned "something from schools, a lot from colleagues, but mostly by herself in her own atelier that she started in 1965"[12] – Sidsel Paaske was preoccupied for her entire life with notions of space and infinity. Having

married the Doctor Fredrik Størmer in 1956, she moved from the minuscule examination of cells under the microscope, to the vastness of space explored by satellites. "How close is close? When is the point of contact actually made?", was her constant preoccupation.[13]

Naturally, textiles were her starting point, since this was her main area of enquiry when she spent a semester at Statens håndverks- og kunstindustriskole (now the Oslo National Academy of Art and Design), and during her years at Statens kvinnelige industriskole (The National Female Industrial School) and the Statens lærerhøgskole (National Teacher Training College). Sketching colour schemes, patterns and structural compositions for printing on fabric, making embroideries and rugs were elements of her exploration. Influenced by painters such as Kumi Sugaï, Rufino Tamayo and Roger Bissière, seen in her period of study in Paris at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière in 1962, she began to explore the worldview conjured from images of madness and torment, intrinsic to the critiques of war and violence pursued by these artists in both abstract and surrealistic form, as well as a contemplative meditation on the vastness of nature, the cosmos and celestial bodies.[14]

The arc, a recurring theme in the paintings of Japanese artist Kumi Sugaï – whom Paaske has also cited as a source of inspiration for her work – returned in *ARC*, two TV-programmes that Paaske presented in 1971 for NRK, with the music of Jan Garbarek. She commented on this leitmotif in connection with her exhibition at the Kunstforeningen, during the Jazz Festival in Molde in 1979, where her forty-metre-long gouache-roll *Blue Letter* was presented:

> The sea-horizon is in fact a curve. But what really interests me is the spiral. Our solar system consists of two spirals with the same centre. Everything in the universe moves in a spiral. The cochlea when it grows, ferns, pinecones, flowers, buds, animal horns, all grow in a spiral. Water, power and electricity, fire and the earth elements move in a spiral. A child when it is born turns to find the way out. The spiral is a shape of change and growth. The arc is a segment of a spiral. A pulsating and repeated coil seen from the side forms waves. It structures legality and symmetry.[15]

When, amid protests in Norway against the Vietnam war, the artist Kjartan Slettemark moved out of the country in 1966, Paaske joined him in Stockholm to collaborate with him in an art environment where rebellion, catastrophe and protest were the key words. She continued to concern herself with such matters while working at the Norwegian Polar Institute, which conducted work for monitoring climate, environmental pollutants, biodiversity and geological and topographic mapping in the polar regions. This experience probably also augmented her research into space and technology, already strong in her art. The necessity to analyse primordial space and the traces that history leaves behind was also exemplified in her exhibition of May 1972 at Kunstnernes Hus in Oslo

titled 'Bird on Fire'. The exhibition consisted primarily of enamel images. In her notes, she writes: "The enamel technique is ancient and practised both in ancient Egypt and China, where they melt down metal threads, among other things, to achieve the sharpest separation between the two colours". 'Bird on Fire' is:

> the phoenix rising from the ashes. I think it is an important step in an artist's development, to burn down and let something new rise up again. This has happened to me I guess. Fire also indicates something dramatic – it is not totally peaceful around us. Bird and fire represent at the same time life and death.[16] The enamel process, which is technically associated with many risks before the piece is finished, requires great accuracy because of the material's delicate nature. One melts a glass mass. Different colours have different burning times. Burning requires 850–1000 degrees celsius. And the enamels require the same treatment after burning, like filing, washing and grinding.

Critics of Paaske's work would find a new expressiveness in the enamel medium usually associated with 'decorative arts'.[17] Jan-Lauritz Opstad underlined the necessity to use a completely different set of criteria in order to assess enamels, stating that Paaske's enamel paintings deserved a reconsideration as art and not craft.[18]

In an interview, Paaske stated:

> Today we talk extensively about how art should be political. More than ever before, artists are concerned with war and other miseries surrounding us. What concerns me is the poetics of the human mind and the environment. It is precisely during these times that there is a need for people to create poetic things, just to exit the sadness and evil that exist around and within us.[19]

Her poetic evocations of the primordial Earth and the cosmos questioned the aspiration for dominance inherent in discovery for discovery's sake. She also questioned the perceived primitivism of other cultures, revealing equally complex philosophical and abstract conceptual systems that denote a common impulse to understand the universe and humankind's place within it.[20] Her dialectic extended beyond the gallery and site, often creating specific relationships between the cultural past and present.[21]

By 1979, Paaske's world, which up until then had adhered to abstraction,[22] had become dominated by a single colour, blue, which returns in both her poem *Indigo* and in the *Blue Letter*. Seeing, along with her contemporaries, the canvas' surface as a limited space for expression in those years,[23] she aimed to achieve another space that could generate phasing and repetition.[24] One may thus draw an unambiguous parallel between the performativity of Paaske's work and the resilient Beat culture that is prominent in the attitudes and negotiations of her writings and gouaches.[25] The colour of denim – the uniform of a

generation whose rebellious attitude was an articulation of urban change, a transnational phenomenon, a feature of youth and political culture throughout Europe, America and beyond – was coming to an end.

STARS, GHOSTS, UNDERLINGS

During the 1990s, a major research project, led by Professor Jon Eivind Kolberg, was conducted in the Scandinavian countries in an attempt to analyse the implementation and expansion of the welfare state model in Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden from the 1960s. This was a period characterised by a transition from the pre-war conception of employment (one income per household and full employment among men), to the expansion of education at the secondary and postsecondary levels, which signified a large mobilisation of women on the labour market,[26] and a shift from jobs in former industries and public administration to the welfare-state system of employment. In Norway, the number leaving the textile industry were particularly high, with a drop-off rate that was more than twice as high in absolute terms than that of the second largest industry, the retail trade. "As in all advanced Western countries, textiles is a 'sunset industry' [...] Total employment in Norway fell by 47 percent during the 1970s', attested researcher Kare Hagen, affirming that 'beyond a doubt, job insecurity must have been a concrete experience among employees of the textile industry in the early 1970s". The textile industry, characterised by high recruitment rates due to early retirement, employed both men and women during the 1970s, and the low wages may partly explain the exit from the industry. The Norwegian textile industry was typically located in small communities in the western part of the country, in which the welfare state was the major expanding industry, since the goal was "equal access to welfare services for all, irrespective of where you live". This saved unemployed textile workers from the cost of moving to new jobs.[27]

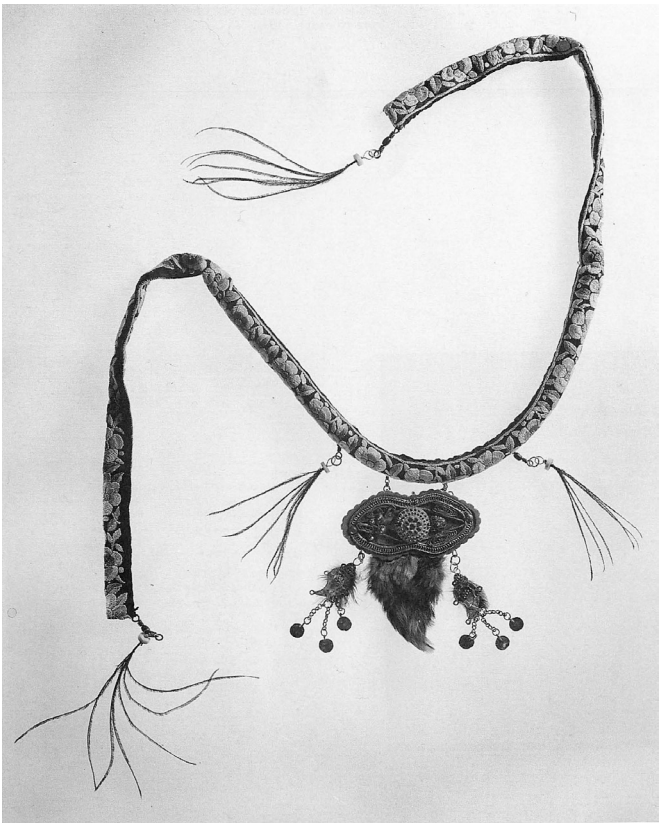
What was at stake was clear: the insecurity was not only on the side of the workers. The expansion of markets outside national borders, and new international interrelationships, were continuing to bring into everyday life in Europe and the US the reality of an instability that was affecting all strata of society, with expanded communities moving away from the idea of Nation. Scarcity returned as a fundamental concept perpetuated by the expansion of transnational companies in those years.[28] This new phase brought to a crescendo concerns about the more unforeseen aspects of industrialisation. The rapid and intensive internationalisation of businesses that had emerged in the 1960s marked their substantial expansion in the 1970s, deterritorialising labour from the Western countries into Asia, an outsourcing of production that had created social insecurity.

In 1971, the sociologist Aina Helgesen had presented her analysis of the economic situation of Norwegian visual artists in an article written in relation to the exhibition 'The Artists' Condition', organised by UKS (Young Artists' Society).[29]

A student of economics and sociology in France in the mid-1960s and a close follower of Simone de Beauvoir's theories, Helgesen brought a new understanding of the political and ethical dimensions related to the passive acceptance of roles assigned by society, with particular emphasis on freedom and responsibility. She held lectures about artists' organisations and unions, reconnecting them to the first art organisations in the country. Such activities, responding to the lack of attention paid to the human sciences, led many artists' organisations to conduct an organised campaign – under the name of Kunstneraksjon 74 (Artists' Campaign 74) requiring the Norwegian state to improve artists' living conditions.[30]

In September of 1972, a referendum was held in Norway on the country's accession to the European common market. Demonstrations against entering the European Economic Community (EEC) had started in Oslo in May 1971. The protests were aimed at increasing awareness of commercialisation and cultural imperialism, in an attempt to preserve community culture and tradition, where cultural development meant personal development. In the fight against the EEC, fishermen and farmers were crucial. The debate was between town and country, the rich and poor, bringing back the traditional opposition between urban workers, and rural fishermen and farmers. Such divisions were related to problems between traditional industry and heavy industry, where the livelihoods of shepherds in the west of the country, for instance, were threatened by emissions from the predominantly industrial locations such as Odda and Svelgen. The environment was on the agenda. The 'language-movement' (målrørsla) grew abundantly in connection with the fight against the EEC. The need to find the correct language to impede cultural colonialism, and to express diversity, meant an awareness of tradition, and this also applied within the arts. Inspiration came from the artistic and cultural struggles of other countries.

As an active member of organisations opposing the European common market, in 1972 Elisabeth Haarr wove the tapestry *EEC – Threatening Us*. In this image a lamb (woven in wool, the main Norwegian fibre for textile production), stands alone in an industrial meadow – depicted in blue – where an eagle (representing the European Economic Community and woven in nylon) is trying to sweep it away. The eagle motif recalls the numerous dictatorships of recent history, such as the Nazi symbol, and returned in Haarr's *The Eagle Tries Again* of 1982. The title plays on the name of the Western *Destry Rides Again* (1939), starring James Stewart, as a sheriff without a gun who abhors violence, and prevails instead through myth and political symbolism. The treatment of *The Eagle Tries Again* is quite different from Haarr's earlier works: the tapestry has lost its planimetric structure to become a floating, movable element. Thus she subverts the symbol of the despotic eagle, creating an unstable, threatening element, always ready to attack, but simultaneously ridiculous.



SIDSEL PAASKE
Wing to wind (1970)

Haarr, who had studied textile design at the Statens Håndverks- og Kunstindsutriskole SHKS (now the Oslo National Academy of the Arts) in the years 1963–67, had absorbed the influence of Kjellaug Hølaas, whose activities as a teacher and a practitioner had a huge impact on the Norwegian textile art of the previous decades, in bringing in all the practical stages of the weaving processes and techniques previously unavailable within the academy. Haarr would often mention the importance of the teaching of Hølaas for her development as an artist, which connected her to the Bauhaus weaving workshop, and to early weavers from outside the country.

The preoccupation with producing textiles that were modern, but could integrate tradition, sat against the backdrop of the influential American Pop art coming to Norway, first and foremost through the work of Robert Rauschenberg and Edward Kienholz. The symbols and the political implications of Pop art became evident in Haarr's work, not only in terms of the commodification of objects, but also of language,[31] through reference to old Swiss banners and the political approach of Polish artists Vladislav Hasior and Tadeuz Trepkowskie. Leaving abstraction behind, at the beginning of the 1970s, she started producing tapestries that integrated figurative components, as in *From the Highway* (1971), Here, she expressed opposition to a court ruling by which a driver who had killed an old man while crossing a road in Oslo on a green pedestrian light was sentenced to less than two months in prison. At this time, Haarr was participating in meetings held by KANAL, a group initiated by architect Jan Carlsen – who worked critically around what was called the Norsk Veiplan – as a loose organisation addressing environmental concerns affecting consumers, architects and city planners. Haarr described *From the Highway*, where the old man is woven in wool, the blood and the tyre tracks in nylon and the background in hemp, as "a beautiful tapestry of a terrible event". She retained these fundamental figurative elements in her artworks in order to draw attention to actual events.

The reflection on internal politics could not be anything other than highly interrelated with international ones, as she would reflect in *Rhodesia* (1971), addressing the political situation of the country now called Zimbabwe (but once known as Southern Rhodesia, and under the Ian Smith dictatorship as plain Rhodesia). In 1965 Smith declared Rhodesia's independence and its subsequent withdrawal from the British Commonwealth. In 1971, Rhodesia's Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) established the last predominantly white regime in southern Africa. The UDI proclamation made by Smith on a radio broadcast to the nation, stated his refusal to surrender to 'Communists' in Africa and Asia, blocking Rhodesia's import of oil and exports of tobacco, vital to the country's economy. The tapestry was woven after Haarr heard the radio broadcast and depicts Smith as Medusa-like white polyester mask, whose snakey plastic hair bites his black subjects. The necessity to denounce insurgent regimes marks Haarr's work in these years.[32]

Two years later, in 1973, she wove the tapestry *Chile*. Few foreign reporters were left in Santiago on the spring morning of Tuesday 11 September 1973 when Augusto Pinochet, commander-in-chief of the Chilean army, overthrew Salvador Allende's presidency with a bloody coup d'état a month after he had been elected to government, moving his country into a period of terrorism, torture and treason. The national stadium was set up as a prison camp; parliament and political parties were dissolved. *Chile* was woven in an attempt to memorialise the suffering of people in a region that had long been subjected to slavery and massacre:

> Give me silence, water, hope.
> Give me struggle, iron, volcanoes.
> Fasten your bodies to me like magnets.
> Hasten to my veins, to my mouth.
> Speak through my words and my blood.[33]

Deeply inspired by Pablo Neruda's *Heights of Macchu Picchu* (1945), a long poem divided into twelve cantos, *Chile* symbolises how the blood of those who fight stains the entire nation red, almost building a new National flag. In Canto X, Neruda asks "Man, where was he?" confronting the human sacrifices made to build the sacred city of Macchu Picchu, where thousands of slaves had laboured for years to drag huge stones by hand two thousand feet above the Urubamba. In the tapestry, a dove, hit during its flight, looses blood (woven in wool) into the red banner (woven in nylon).

One may drew a parallel between *Chile* and *Little White Dove* (*Palomita Blanca*), a film directed by Raúl Ruiz in that same year: both return to a simple narrative in order to stress the historically grounded oppression of those years. In *Little White Dove*, which was the last film made by Ruiz in Chile before leaving for exile in France, he wanted to show the huge divide (not just economic, but cultural) between the rich and the poor in Chile, in order to tackle the betrayal of the new regime. He used a simple plot set during the 1970 election campaign between Salvador Allende and his conservative opponent Jorge Alessandri, about a poor girl being subjugated by an affluent man. The symbol of the white dove, used both by Haarr and Ruiz, is connected to an innocence (and loss thereof) that is so obvious to viewers that it immediately becomes a clear political statement.

Integrating the immediacy of symbols used in political posters – resurgent in the previous decade – and the intrinsic durability and resilience of textiles, Haarr's tapestries aimed at becoming factual records of a specific time and place in which billboards, television screens and advertising were the new instruments of the "obscene delirium of communication".[34] In a Duchampian tautology, Haarr would affirm, "The banner is a banner. Textile is the canvas … If you paint red on a canvas it is already a construction. Textile brings a message with it. It is like music."[35]

When Haarr started work on *Greetings to the silk-spinner women in Bangladesh / Swan Song* (1977–83), it was as a

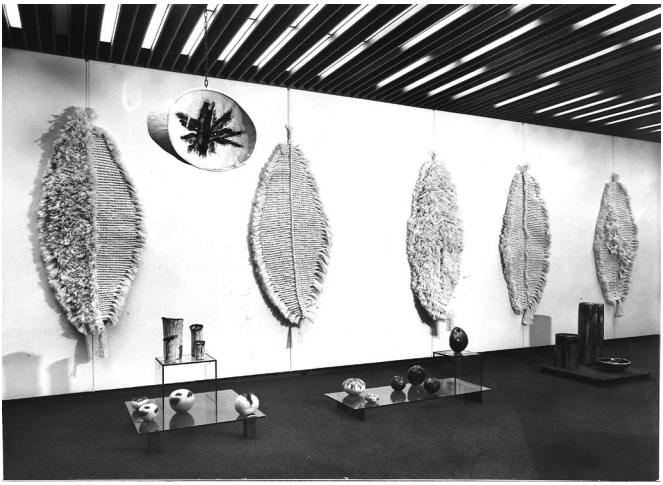
tribute to a group of unmarried mothers who had created their own silk-spinning factory and weaving workshop in cooperation with the Norwegian teacher Elisabeth Helsing, who established Ammehjelpen (the Nursing Council). Helsing had travelled to Bangladesh with the aim of improving the conditions of women in the region, and had given Haarr a number of silk-reels from the Bangladesh workshop on the condition that she would make a blanket from it in return. The tapestry questions women's place in a society in which, like Thailand and Indonesia, textiles accounted for over 50 percent of GDP (Gross Domestic Product) in the early 1970s, and was one of the most important industrial employers of female labour. The latest technological changes in the textile industry had brought a search for improved machinery to increase productivity and thereby to combat the cost-based competitiveness of lower-wage producers from Asian countries.

Due to tendon-inflammation, however, Haarr was unable to finish the work until years later. The title *Swan Song* refers to this necessity to abandon weaving: "Physical challenges force you to rethink the way in which you express yourself", she commented. "How can you expand the medium?" She added that textiles go beyond the barrier of the image, due to a property that belongs to the material itself. "The language of textile is universal", she said. "One can unconsciously feel the traces of the hands. In painting you look at images or the lack thereof. The language of textile goes beyond, goes to the personal. When it comes to the material, one asks what one has done with it."[36] Umberto Eco has suggested that since the development of the mass media, aberrant decodings have become the norm, when once they were the exception, because of the wide gap that exists between those who create the material carried by the media and those who receive this material.[37] Referring to Eco, Haarr would look for a simple medium that could directly convey the message.

NEW FABRICS OF TRADITION

In the foreword of the catalogue *Norwegian Craftsmen Today* (1973), curator and professor Alf Bøe wrote that in Norway, as well as in other countries, the handicrafts of the day had quite different requirements from those of previous decades, partly due to an attitude of protest towards the spreading industrialisation. The new artefacts were in fact bearers of a personal expression, since the objects created by the craftsman went out into a society that could "very well exist without them, because every practical, justifiable need [could] be satisfied by industrial mass production [...] Thus, handicraft becomes exclusive, and is freed from the demands of necessity. Removed from the utilitarian demands of everyday life, they thereby expose themselves to an evaluation on a level with fine art".[38] Bøe had for long time been concerned with the place of traditional handicrafts in the era of industrialisation.[39]

The revolts of the 1960s, with the consequent radicalisation of politics in the



BRIT FUGLEVAAG
Installation View of her Solo Exhibition at Henie Onstad Kunstsenter, Høvikodden, in 1970. In the background *Element I, II, III, IV, V* (1970). Courtesy of the artist

BBRIT FUGLEVAAG
Nøkken (1970). Ryszard Warsinski playing with the artwork. Courtesy of the artist

(top)
ELISABETH HAARR
From the Highway (1971). Elisabeth Haarr/ BONO 2014

ELISABETH HAARR
Rhodesia (1971). Elisabeth Haarr/ BONO 2014

1970s, resulted in an increased scepticism towards industry. Overproduction, environmental pollution and inhumane working conditions went against the craftsman's concern with the natural, the authentic, kinship, time and dedication. It also became clear that industry was not an arena for artistic innovation, since Norwegian companies did not pay much attention to designers.[40] These new tendencies were soon reported by many experts within the field. Anniken Thue would title her historical introduction to the period 'Craft, a Concept in Transition',[41] while Jan Lauritz Opstad would speak about 'a new consciousness'.[42] The concept of art-oriented craft allowed for an artistic freedom that had never before been permitted for applied arts. The cultivation of aesthetic qualities and the search for 'sensory' qualities in craft prompted the art historian Gunnar Danbolt to compare this development to modernist research in painting and to conclude that Synnøve Anker Aurdal and Brit Fuglevaag were the pioneers of textile art in Norway.[43]

In September 1976, *Arts Magazine* published an article by Joseph Masheck (who, the following year, became the editor of *Artforum*) titled 'The Carpet Paradigm: Critical Prolegomena to a Theory of Flatness'.[44] It was an enquiry into the history of ideas in relation to carpets, textiles and related figures of 'integral flatness' that emerged out of the modernist design movement. The essay analysed how "art has spiritual value not because it can be used to escape sublunary reality, but because in displaying only a little of the world it can implicate the world so generally. Painting is an ornament of life because, as at best in the 'applied' or decorative arts themselves, it magnifies (or celebrates) qualities already present in the material life and work".[45] Focusing on the design pattern and fabrication process of carpets and weavings, he overturned the comparison between painting and the textile arts. Attempting to analyse the materiality of modernist painting, he drew attention to how painting continued to mimic the textile operation of interweaving, resulting in a pictorial surface plane that has its own specific kind of retinal flatness.

In 1960, during a fieldtrip to Gothenburg, Sweden, Brit Fuglevaag was exposed to Peruvian and Egyptian tapestry, the latter made by children, whose richness of colours, immediacy of form and composition, made a huge impact on her art, which connected the modernist pictorial ideal with the spontaneity of visual expression found in children's drawings.[46] Trained at the SHKS from 1959 to 1963, Fuglevaag immediately began to experiment with different types of material and relief-like structures and effects, to give tapestry a new dimension. In the mid-1960s the influence of Pop art was almost unavoidable. Internalising Rauschenberg's use of pre-existing everyday objects, large assemblages and ready-made procedures to challenge existing perceptions, and Christo's *Wrappings* – which gave what lay underneath the fabric a quality of nomadic fragility – Fuglevaag used aspects of mass-consumerism in combination with her desire to work in three-dimensional ways.[47] "Everything that happened within the

visual arts could just as well have been done in textiles", she claimed.[48] Plastic clotheslines and other cheap materials became integral to her production in works such as *Bishop in Plastic* and *The Marble Pope*, which were realised during her stay in Paris in 1969. "I am a painter and sculptor",[49] she would state, as she augmented her studies in textiles with painting and composition in order to develop her personal expression. *Bishop in Plastic* and *The Marble Pope* were an homage to the French artist Ipoustéguy's marble sculptures *La Mort du Pape* (1967) and *Mort du Père* (1967–68), which were exhibited alongside his paintings in Paris in 1968. The tapestries have little to do with Ipoustéguy's figurative treatment, playing entirely with the rendition of the material. "The material is the message; it has an authentic power and is itself an expressive part of a work of art", said Fuglevaag, articulating the basic idea with which she created many experimental tapestries in the 1960s and 70s.

At this time, the most avant-garde works in textiles were being made in Eastern Europe, with Poland as the powerhouse. Fuglevaag travelled to Poland in 1963 to take further training after she had concluded her studies in Oslo. Here, she found a different attitude to weaving and its possibilities. In 1969, on her return to Norway, she also started working on the *Formation* series and began to weave large three-dimensional tapestries in heavy materials such as sisal and jute. Using a technique of bundling together the warp threads in order to create different textures and surfaces, she would realise works such as *Huldra* (1970), with a kind of trimming technique, which many associated with the Polish tradition, but which was rarely used there. Fuglevaag often used uncoloured sisal, experimenting with the addition of other materials, such as clotheslines, plastic bags and cotton rags as warp.

Element, Form, Formation (1969–70) were Fuglevaag's first pieces produced as a series, a format that would recur in her work at this time. The paramount idea of repetition is the underlining of difference, since every variation calls attention to the uniqueness of each component of a series, and thus asserts and simultaneously abandons the viability of a predetermined idea.[50] Playing with this idea of repetition, the large tapestries with sculptural forms such as *Form I*, *Form II*, *Huldra* and *Nøkken* (all 1970), interact with the room in which they hang, and try to break with both the two-dimensional and three-dimensional aesthetics of the art.

Nøkken was the only work that hung freely in the space. In the Norwegian folk tradition, a Nøkk is a water-spirit that lives in rivers and lakes and can take on different shapes, such as a human, a horse or a wooden stick. Especially dangerous after sunset, the Nøkk is a spiteful creature that seeks to lure people into the water. When the Nøkk shouts, he is warning that a person will drown. But if he is called by name, he loses his power.

The name *Huldra* recalls another Norwegian mythological figure: a woman residing in the rocks and mountains, who belongs to the magical spirits of the underground world. Often referred

to as a wood nymph, and known for her mesmerising beauty, although she has a cow's tail and is sometimes described as being hollow in the back, she entices men far into the forest, only to disappear from sight, so that they are left alone and never find their way back into the world of humans. When *Huldra* was exhibited in Switzerland in 1973, the curator would report that it showed "the transition from one function to another ... Strings move deliberately beyond the boundaries of the wall and spread onto the floor, thus drawing the room into the picture".[51]

Several art critics have put forward the idea that Fuglevaag played with eroticism and female sensuality in her work. She herself, however, claims that it has never been her intention.[52] The returning motif of luring in *Huldra* and *Nøkken*, besides recalling the necessity to integrate tradition within the modern, seems to invite reflection on the power of the artwork in itself to lure, to attract the spectator in another dimension (just as the pieces extend into the space of the room).[53]

The well-being of the Earth itself emerged as an issue in the 1970s, initially focused on natural resources and the human environment, and later extended to the complex systems that support life on Earth. This brought attention to a lost alliance of the human with nature, the fertility of the Earth and the ancestral concept of magic. As Silvia Federici would argue, in the capitalist process, the goal was the 'transformation of the body into a work-machine, and the subjugation of women to the reproduction of the workforce'.[54] In her analysis of witch-hunting, she interprets the practice not only as the 'destruction of the power of women', but also as the destruction of the very concept of magic. Witches, with their potions and spells, were conceived of as beings who had used mystical and practical methods to control their reproductive capacities, and were very often exterminated as such. Federici identifies this aim to destroy their fertility and magic as the desire of a capitalist work force to achieve control of the productive body.[55]

In the catalogue *Fiber Works. Europe and Japan*, accompanying an exhibition at the National Museum of Modern Art in Kyoto in 1976, the curator Takeo Uchiyama reported: "There is afoot a widespread movement to create artworks with fibres of quite a different order from traditional textiles. No precise name has yet been accorded them, though sometimes they go under the traditional title of 'tapestries' or more recently 'fibre works' or 'fibre structures'. The fact is that these works constitute some of the most avant-garde art during the past decade and certainly have a vigour with which no other genre of art has kept pace."[56]

Fuglevaag went on to become a teacher of drawing and textiles at SHKS in Oslo in 1970 and Head of Department of Textile from 1972 to 1978. She became extremely outspoken in those years, being invited to participate in several international exhibitions, which aimed at displaying the 'new art' around the world. In 1976, following a protest made by textile students at the academy, she reported the shocking working conditions of artists:

> Craft is so laborious and time-consuming and the material costs are so high that profits will be small in relation to the work effort. The artists in their workshop are making a cultural effort to continue traditional crafts, preserving them and renewing them at the same time. In this way, craftsmen give contemporary people the chance to surround themselves with striking handicraft products, forms and colours in their everyday life. The group that makes this cultural effort is one of the most economically disadvantaged in our society, during their education and later in the working careers. For how long craftsmen will manage and how much we want to subsidise our cultural life is an open question.[57]

THE EXPANDED FIELD

When, in 1979, Rosalind Krauss analysed the impossibility of narrowing down the concept of contemporary sculpture, she overcame the impasse by coining the term 'expanded field'. She argued:

> [T]he *not-architecture* is, according to the logic of a certain kind of expansion, just another way of expressing the term *landscape*, and the *not-landscape* is, simply, architecture. The expansion to which I am referring is called a Klein group when employed mathematically and has various other designations, among them the Piaget group, when used by structuralists involved in mapping operations within the human sciences. By means of this logical expansion a set of binaries is transformed into a quaternary field which both mirrors the original opposition and at the same time opens it.[58]

Krauss applies the same principle to painting by establishing a different set of terms for a similar expansion that moves from the pair *architecture–landscape* to the opposition *uniqueness–reproducibility*. One may apply a similar reading to the field of exploration of Sidsel Paaske, Brit Fuglevaag and Elisabeth Haarr, who aimed to trespass categorisations and to suspend the modernist category of *crafts*.

A red thread connects the aspirations of Paaske, Fuglevaag and Haarr, as artists who championed the autonomy and freedom of the work of art, and its interrelation to society. All tackled through their artistic activity the social situation in a period of crisis for the arts – and a consequent 'crisis of experience' – brought about by technology and its forces of production, which had set itself the task of mastering nature. At a time when 'lust for profit' was generating images as 'a highly productive use of the human being's self-alienation',[59] they attempted to expand the medium in an attempt to overarch the historical framework of capitalist modernity. All saw the need for solidarity, for forms of collectivity and for challenging the interrelated forms of technology and technique, reproducibility and the experience of the new – with its many historical and political contradictions. All predominantly worked, however, not from a specific external reality, but from an inner sense of excitement and conflict, which remains visible in their art.[60]

Written by Antonio Cataldo,
with research by Henrietta Taube

1
Anni Albers, 'The Pliable Plane: Textiles in Architecture', in *On Designing*, Wesleyan University Press, Middletown, CT: 1971, p.19.

2
Ibid., p.21.

3
'What we should bear in mind here is the specific quality of textiles in regard to flexibility, pliability, and their high degree of performance relative to their weight, before taking up the part they play aesthetically. [...] In a life of wandering, not only *what* is carried has to be portable, but the *means* for carrying things have to be found and developed. A string that holds a bundle together, or a group of strings forming a net or a bag are direct ancestors to our air-luggage today. The textile material, pliable and lightweight, is of the utmost efficiency in transit.' *Ibid.*, p.19.

4
'An emphasis on visual space has accompanied the search for an impression of weightlessness in architecture. Some theorists of a supposed architectural revolution claim Le Corbusier as a pioneer in this connection, but in fact it was Brunelleschi, and more recently Baltard and then Eiffel, who blazed the trail. Once the effect of weightiness or massiveness upon which architects once depended has been abandoned, it becomes possible to break up and reassemble volumes arbitrarily according to the dictates of an architectural neoplasticism. Modernity expressly reduces so-called 'iconological' forms of expression (signs and symbols) to surface effects. Volumes or masses are deprived of any physical consistency. The architect considers himself responsible for laying down the social function (or use) of buildings, offices, or dwellings, yet interior walls which no longer have any spatial or bearing role, and interiors in general, are simultaneously losing all character or content. Even exterior walls no longer have any material substance: they have become mere membranes barely managing to concretise the division between inside and outside.' Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* [1974], Blackwell Publishing, Maiden, MA and Oxford: 1991, pp.146–47.

5
Walter Benjamin, 'Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century', in *The Arcades Project*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA: 1999.

6
Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, *op. cit*.

7
Hannah Arendt, 'The Conquest of Space and the Stature of Man', in *The New Atlantis*, Fall, 2007, pp.43–55.

8
Ibid.

9
Ibid.

10
Ibid.

11
Ibid.

12
See *Sidsel Paaske 1937–1980*, exh. cat., Galleri F 15, Moss: 1989.

13
Ibid.

14
These are names that Paaske herself mentions as inspiration for her work in *Arbeiderbladet*, 4 January 1966. The three artists are also mentioned by some of the critics who reviewed Paaske's exhibitions in the mid-1960s. See Magne Malmanger in *Dagbladet*, 16 January 1966 and Ole Henrik Moe, *Aftenposten*, January 1966.

15
Mette Cecilie Monssen, *Sidsel Paaske 1937–1980. Slik musikeren improvoserer over sine tema, fabulerer jeg over mine...*, unpublished: 1997.

16
Newspaper clippings from Sidsel Paaske's clip binder, edited by Celine Wormdal.

17
See Henne Jonsrud, *Aftenposten*: 1972.

18
See Jan-Lauritz Opstad, *Norsk emalie*, Huitfeldt Forlag, Oslo: 1994.

19
Interview with Sidsel Paaske, 1 January 1972, in an unknown newspaper in connection with the jazz festival in Molde.

20
The artist Gro Jessen wrote: 'In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the influence of other cultures, the Sami as well as the African, was apparent in Sidsel's work. This was not a superficial imitation of foreign cultures; it was more that these works revealed opportunities to communicate thematic content. A typical response to this aspect of Sidsel's work is to be found in a critique by Moss Avis of the exhibition *Tendenser 1980 (Trends 1980)* held at the Galleri F 15, Moss: "Sidsel Paaske has some remarkable works. A few large decorative fetishes – which remind us of those we have seen from Africa, Borneo and among Indians in South America. Such ornaments, in these tribal communities, bear a content that can be understood by the initiated. Here at the exhibition, they have lost that sense of belonging." One does not expect "content" from objects or from craftsmanship. One expects a controlled adaptation of accepted aesthetic values in a clear and straightforward functional context. In the late 1970s, Sidsel made contact with the arts and crafts community in Oslo and in 1978 she became a member of the workshop in Gabelsgate. The workshop benefited from her demagogical style, while she benefited from a professional environment.' See *Sidsel Paaske 1937–1980*, *op. cit*.

21
'I found I found' by Sidsel Paaske, in *ibid*.
'The necklace originally derives from indigenous peoples' use of the amulet's magic roots in the forces of nature. The "worthless" natural materials form the core of the language that the amulet speaks, and the forces that live in the materials formulate the amulet's utterance. That it furthermore embellishes the person wearing the amulet is an obvious consequence. Its purpose is to protect against accidents, illness, death and evil powers and to bring good luck, health, love and fertility to those who believe in the power of the amulet. Later on, the amulet

has become jewellery and a status symbol, where the inherent power of the material was subordinate to its economic value, which was now the primary concern. The "worthless" common materials were replaced by the "expensive" and rare – gold, silver and precious stones. These were carefully processed by the guild jeweller, the new "magician", who submitted himself to the demands of the material as well as to people's vanity. The necklace was sold, not as before because of its power, but since it was made from rare materials available only to the few. The wearer was now "enhanced", but the deepest purpose had been lost and all that remained was evidence of a man's wealth or a woman's beauty. Common materials, however, never lose their appeal and protective magic. On the contrary. In the shadow of the "rare", they have grown powerful, their language has gained something with which to be contrasted. Hair, skin, bones, teeth, horns, feathers and shells from lynx, elephant, cow, snake, lizard, kingfisher, ptarmigan, turtle and snail shells have all winked at me from the edge of a ditch, the sea shore, the forest floor or the seabed. They have been stored away at the bottom of the chest for a long time. Now is the time to take them out into the light and bring them together, as they have asked me to.' *Ibid*.

22

'Abstract art demands something of the audience. To look at an abstract painting is a piece of intellectual work. One cannot wait for the image to give anything away, like a glossy picture or a photo. It requires a certain amount of intellect, empathy and a willingness to allow the impression of the painting enter you, if you want to get pleasure from an abstract painting'. From an interview with Sisdel Paaske, Gro Jessen and Turid Holter. Mette Cecilie Monssen, *Sidsel Paaske 1937–1980*, *op. cit.*

23

For instance, John Baldessari's *What Is Painting* (1968), presents a painted text, which ends with the statement: 'Do you sense how all the parts of a good picture are involved with each other. Not just placed side by side? Art is a creation for the eye and can only be hinted at with words.' As part of the Skippergata group, Paaske rejected conformism in art and conventional media of expression.

24

'Through the stamping-technique I achieve a repetition of the same element that points towards infinity (like snowflakes, leaves, ants, reindeer, stars) and by printing in an increasing number from page to page I include the time aspect in a way that a painted picture would not be able to represent.' Sidsel Paaske, notes to *Indigo*, c.1979

25

'I don't know about where fiction ordinarily directs itself, but I am quite deliberately addressing myself to the whole area of what we call dreams. Precisely what is a dream? A certain juxtaposition of word and image. I've recently done a lot of experiments with scrapbooks. I'll read in the newspaper something that reminds me of or has relation to something I've written. I'll cut out the picture or article and paste it in a scrapbook beside the words from my book. Or I'll be walking down the street and I'll suddenly see a scene from my book and I'll photograph it and put it in a scrapbook. I've found that when preparing a page, I'll almost invariably dream that night something relating to this juxtaposition of word and image. In other words, I've been interested in precisely how word and image get around on very, very complex association lines. I do a lot of exercises in what I call time travel, in taking coordinates, such as what I photographed on the train, what I was thinking about at the time, what I was reading and what I wrote; all of this to see how completely I can project myself back to that one point in time.' William S. Burroughs, interviewed by Conrad Knickerbocker in 1966 in *Paris Review*; reprinted in *Writers at Work,* 3rd Series, New York, NY: 1967. Art Historian Jorunn Haakestad addressed the influence of Beat culture in the avant-garde circles of Bergen at the beginning of the 1960s and 1970s, as well as in fringes of the textile art in Oslo during that period, in a lecture titled 'In the Shadow of the Beat Generation: Norwegian Textile Art Crossing Borders 1960–1980' held at OCA on 17 October 2013, whose subsequent essay has been reproduced in the current publication, p.27-33.

26

Kare Hagen, 'Welfare State Employees: Where Did They Come From?', in Jon Eivind Kolberg (ed.), *The Welfare State as Employer*, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, NY: 1991, pp.59–90.

27

Ibid.

28

In 1980 the Austrian philosopher Ivan Illich formulated a new theory about the industrial societies and their fundamental structures, which have at their very bases the principle of scarcity. 'Shadow – Work', *Philosophica* 26,1980, pp.7–46: 'I want to explore why, in an industrial society, this apartheid must be; why without apartheid based on sex or pigmentation, on certification or race, or party membership, a society built on the assumption of scarcity cannot exist. And to approach the unexamined forms of apartheid in concrete terms, I want to speak about the fundamental bifurcation of work that is implicit in the industrial mode of production. I call this complement to wage labor "shadow-work". It comprises most housework women do in their homes and apartments, the activities connected with shopping, most of the homework of students cramming for exams, the toil expended commuting to and from the job. It includes the stress of forced consumption, the tedious and regimented surrender to therapists, compliance with bureaucrats, the preparation for work to which one is compelled, and many of the activities usually labeled "family life".'

29

Aina Helgesen, *The Art Situation in Norway* (1971), reprinted in the current publication, p.50-54.

30

Elisabeth Haarr was Chair of the board of the visual artists in Bergen

(Bildende Kunstnere Hordaland), and was elected member of the action-commitee for boycotting the music-festival in Bergen [Festspillene]. She would often underline how the Kunstneraksjon 74 movement was fundamental for establishing a new solidarity among artists. On Kunstneraksjon 74, see Else Brenn and Bjørn Nilsen (eds.), *Kamp og Kultur. Perspektiver på 70-tallet*, Aschehoug, Oslo, 1997, and Eva Lange, *Artists within Society – Perspectives on Artists' Politics in the 70s*, reprinted in the current publication, p.44-49.

31

'I claim that the textile crafts and textile products we have made in the past, as well as the ones we make now, represent a language. This is not just a narrative language like the language we read in a book. Specific ideas come to mind when we read a book. We have specific ideas in mind when we see certain fabrics; there is a reason why we surround ourselves with them. This relates to age, the place we are raised, who our grandmother was, and so on. When I look at the betting slip on TV on Saturdays I do not see football results, but a knitting pattern. "What a great sweater that could have become", I think while twelve straight flicker across the screen.

When I see work done in felt, I think that this is painstaking and laborious, and that people in Mongolia have been making entire houses or tents from felt. Women from the north will think of their grandmother, fishing, cold, money, childhood, when they see the same felt. If I see silk, I think of toil and poverty, beautiful spectacles and shiny tabs, warmth and mystery. Others think of fine ladies when they think of silk.' Elisabeth Haar, *Det tekstile spraket*, RODE FANE, no. 4–5, 1987, pp.19–23.

32

'We live in the era of imperialism. Should we take advantage of and steal third-world culture? Shall we take from women in the third world their specialties, preserve and authorise their rich and yet vibrant textile tradition just as the rich deprived people in this country of our culture? Do we think of exploitation when we walk around in Palestinian dresses, patched after diligent use, or decorate our living rooms with blankets from Guatemala? Do we consider the reasons why women have to sell the clothes they are wearing on their bodies? Do we think of why the products of developing countries are so cheap, and of who it is that buys the textiles? Can we, with our lack of history in the textile area, understand the real motives for why their fabrics look like they do when we do not even understand our own textile history?

Do we know something about the similarities and differences to our own female textile world and tradition? Do we consider the similarity in mindset expressed when women in North Africa knit socks using the same principles as we do?

Is it help or western imperialism when people "help" whole villages, for example in India, to adapt to western textile production in order to make it more marketable? Oriental rugs. Who really knows that there are women and children sitting in wet basements in order to allow the material to stretch and then shrink when the finished carpets are brought up into the daylight – and that this is done in order to get the closest possible knots on the carpets. Should we not envision the women and children in the wet basements when we see a so-called genuine Persian rug?' *Ibid.*

33

Pablo Neruda, 'HEIGHTS OF MACCHU PICCHU', in *The Way to Macchu Picchu* (trans. John Felstiner), Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA: 1980, pp.77–98.

34

Jean Baudrillard, 'The Ecstasy of Communication', in *Selected Writings*, Polity Press, Cambridge: 1988, pp.126–34.

35

Interview with the author, 16 January 2014.

36

Ibid.

37

Umberto Eco, 'Towards a Semiotic Inquiry into the Television Message', Working Papers in Cultural Studies 3, 1972, pp.103–21.

38

Alf Bøe, *Norwegian Craftsmen Today*, Pamphlet: 1973.

39

Alf Bøe, *From Gothic Revival to Functional Form*, Oslo University Press, Oslo: 1957.

40

Jorunn Veiteberg, *Crafts in Transition*, Pax Forlag, Bergen: 2005, pp.22–24.

41

Anniken Thue, 'Kunsthåndverket 1940–80', in Knut Berg, *Norges Kunsthistorie*, vol.7., Gyldendal Norsk Forlag, Oslo: 1983, pp.350–420.

42

Jan-Lauritz Opstad, *En ny Bevissthet. Norsk kunsthåndverk 1970–1990*, C. Huitfeldt Forlag, Oslo: 1989.

43

Gunnar Danbolt, *Norsk kunsthistorie: Bilde og skulptur fra vikingtida til i dag*, Det Norske Samlaget, Oslo: 2001, p.371.

44

Joseph Masheck, 'The Carpet Paradigm: Critical Prolegomena to a Theory of Flatness', *Arts Magazine* 51, September 1976, pp.82–109.

45

Ibid.

46

By the middle of World War I, at a time when the nationalist ideals of European high culture had produced the 'insanity' of trench warfare, Dada had already proclaimed the end of high culture, promoting instead the cult of the irrational, chance and the spontaneous. The origins of its name have been fiercely debated, ranging from a word for a child's rocking-horse, or the tail of a sacred cow, to the repetition of the Russian word for 'yes' or the initials of Dionysius the Areopagite, or merely nonsense syllables. In place of art, Dada promised anti-art.

47

Anniken Thue, *Et tilbakeblikk. Britt Fuglevaag 1963–1983 – en tekstilkunstner samler sine tråder*, exh. cat., Kunstnernes Hus, Oslo: 1983.

48

Ibid.

49
Interview with Helga Gravermoen, in *Fra todimensjonal billedvev til tredimensjonal tekstilkunst. Brit Fuglevaags bidrag til utviklingen av norsk tekstilkunst i perioden 1963–1974*, unpublished, 2002.

50
'Real opposition is not a maximum of difference, but a minimum of repetition – a repetition reduced to two, echoing and returning on itself; a repetition which has found the means to define itself.' Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, Continuum, New York, NY and London: 2004, p.15.

51
André Kuenzi, *La Nouvelle tappiserie*, Les Èditions de Bonvent, Geneva: 1973, p.127.

52
Helga Gravermoen, *Fra todimensjonal billedvev til tredimensjonal tekstilkunst. Brit Fuglevaags bidrag til utviklingen av norsk tekstilkunst i perioden 1963–1974, op. cit.*

53
'In *Captivating a Man*, a performance by Martha Wilson from 1972, she reprised the theme of captivation, artistic identity and gender, perhaps addressing the gender ambivalences in Man Ray's famous photograph of Duchamp as Rose Sélavy, alluding both to Duchamp's legacy as father-genitor of conceptual art, and his "self-feminisation", which disrupted the "masculine authority of modernist authorship".' Amelia Jones, *Postmodernism and the En-Gendering of Marcel Duchamp*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, MA: 1994, p.180.

54
Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, The Body and Primitive Accumulation*, Autonomedia, New York, NY: 2004.

55
Ibid.

56
Fiber Works. Europe and Japan, exh. cat., The National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto: 1976, p.2.

57
'Arbeidsforholdene er svært dårlige', *Aftenposten*, 13 March 1976.

58
Rosalind Krauss, 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field', *October*, Vol. 8. (Spring), 1979, pp.30–44.

59
Walter Benjamin: *Selected Writings, Volume 3: 1935–1938*, (ed. Howard Eiland & Michael W. Jennings), Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA., & London: 1991.

60
In an interview Sidsel Paaske said: 'I do not work from a specific external reality, but from an inner sense of excitement. That must be released – it is a conflict situation that I paint. So it must be the tight and sober against the free and picturesque, 'hard-edge" against the "diffuse"'.

IN THE SHADOW OF THE BEAT GENERATION. TEXTILE ART BREAKS NEW GROUND: 1960-1980

Jorunn Haakestad

Much was in ferment in the textile art environment in post-war Norway. Textile materials and techniques were in the process of leaving the female domestic arena and of conquering the world. Many institutional barriers had been overcome and many traditional textile boundaries transcended. Where, though, did the impetus for such a break come from, and in what cultural framework are we to understand such developments?

There is of course no one single answer to such questions. And to find answers we have to explore the borderland that surrounds this field of art. We have to look into the changes to society, new ideas about gender and roles – and most of all the changed view of the socially educative function of art and artists.

One impulse for these major changes can, I think, be found in the American beat culture that reached Norway and the Norwegian art world in the 1960s. It may seem paradoxical that the beat generation, which was so strongly linked to revolt and male dominance, had an emancipatory effect on the field of textiles, which at that time was dominated by women.

HEKT/EMPTINESS

"Sidsel Paaske has been an extremely important figure for us art crafters who work with textiles. Sidsel has her own unique place in the history of Norwegian art," Gro Jessen said to me when I interviewed her over 25 years ago. Jessen pointed at a work of art they had collaborated on – a fabric print, a material picture with shells, beads and a cat-skin physically present in the work. Gro Jessen (1939–2003) herself was one of the prominent figures of Norwegian textile art at the time. She taught at the Academy of Art and Design and was already the 'grand old woman' of the fabric printing discipline. In 1982, Jessen created a work she called 'Sidsel's landscape'. It was purchased by the Nordenfjeldske Kunstindustrimuseum (National Museum of Decorative Arts, Trondheim) and is a requiem for her friend, who had died two years earlier.

After that, I thought no more about Sidsel Paaske (1937–1980). Few people knew about her, and I had plenty of other things to concentrate on. Not until now, quite recently, when I was looking through a collection of poems by Jan Erik Vold, did I come across her. She had illustrated the book *HEKT*. The drawings and cover were all by her. *HEKT* was Jan Erik Vold's third collection of poems. The text on the inside cover was a letter from a 20-year-old American soldier in Vietnam, dated 17 September 1965 and printed in the New Statesman on 8 October that

same year. Only one poem referred precisely to the Vietnam war, but the text on the inside cover and the content and form of the poems create associations with the United States, with the American beat poets and, of course, to Haiku. The beat lies in the references to the Zen of the East – to Buddhism and the preoccupation with *emptiness*. As I leafed through the book, I could feel the beat pounding out of Sidsel Paaske's illustrations, and she put me on the track of what I now see as a powerful creative impulse in the female-dominated field of textile art.

BEAT CULTURE

What, then, characterises the beat generation, and how can we claim that the movement is of importance for Norwegian textile art, or Norwegian fabric printing to be more precise? The beat culture took the form of a social protest and alternative lifestyle in the period immediately following the Second World War. It was an artistic and a social revolt, its origins going back to a radical American tradition, from Walt Whitman and the so-called 20th-century traditionalists. But there were also obvious connections with European high-brow culture and non-Western cultural traditions – with the Indians in America and the wisdom of the Orient. In the 1940s and '50s, beat culture flourished in the colourful bohemian districts of Greenwich Village in New York and North Beach in San Francisco. The groups mainly comprised informal networks of young people, linked by personal friendship, common artistic aspirations and an awareness of belonging to the post-war generation, in the same way as 'the lost generation' had experienced the period after the First World War.

Compared to the USA, the post-war period in Norway lasted well into the 1960s. Unlike the USA, Norway had been involved in the war in a physical sense. Infrastructures had been destroyed and the economy was in a poor state. Import restrictions for private cars, for example, were not done away with until the 1960s. To oversimplify, we might say that it was not until the early 1960s that the mental and material climate in Norway was susceptible to beat impulses. Beat culture in the USA was never organised, but it included such well-known names as the poets Allan Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac and William Burroughs. It is interesting in our present context that Allan Ginsberg's iconic poem 'How!' was first performed at an art gallery in San Francisco in 1955.

The name derives from the Afro-American jazz scene and the term includes a feeling of being poor, excluded and vulnerable. In addition, there was a conviction that this outsider status gave access to a deeper existential and spiritual insight.

GRUPPE 66

The feeling of living in voluntary simplicity and poverty and yet of being blessed and having access to a deeper existential insight can be traced back to the avant-garde artistic environment of Bergen in the early 1960s. In Gruppe 66, Konkret Analyse og Samliv [Group 66, Concrete Analysis and Living Together], Elsebeth Rahlff was a key figure.

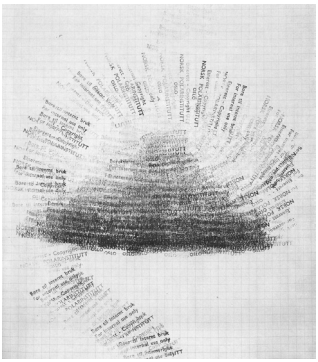
Elsebeth Rahlff had come to Bergen from Denmark, where she had qualified in textile printing. She and her partner, the painter Olav Herman Hansen, became

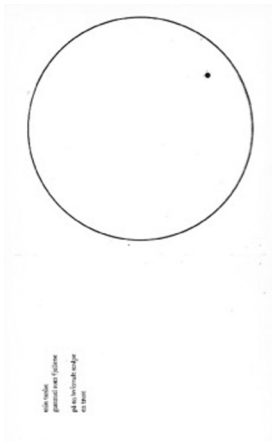
the two central figures of a loosely-knit artistic environment. Gruppe 66 challenged not only the well-educated public but the very institution of art itself. Not until 2008 did KODE – the Art Museums of Bergen – feel ready to present the group and its multimedia work in its exhibition rooms.

In connection with the Konkret Analyse exhibition of 1970, the group gave a performance in which the public were invited to change clothes and dress up in 'concrete textiles'. The performance has been documented in a series of photos taken in the home of Rahlff and Hansen in advance of the happening. The pictures show the collective attitude and the social interaction of this group. Sex, living together and marriage were themes to be challenged and investigated, as exemplified by Elsebeth Rahlff's humorous *Bridal Bedspread*. What connected those of the Bergen milieu to the fallout of the American beat environment was a feeling – a 'life-feeling' – of standing outside greater society's codes of practice and its demands for conformity. Like the beat generation, Gruppe 66 stood for an anti-authoritarian lifestyle that was linked to a democratic, spontaneous and non-academic aesthetic. Life was to be lived authentically in material simplicity, with all senses fully developed and open to visionary and ecstatic experiences, with or without the aid of consciousness-expanding means. The sources of this alternative style of art and life were sought in ethnic, social and sexual minority cultures: in Zen-Buddhism, bebop jazz and other forms of subversive artistic and cultural expression.

FEMALE BEAT

The American beat generation was wild, strong, anti-authoritarian and masculine. It was hard to be a woman in the group. To be a woman and on top of that an artist led towards an understanding of what being marginal in a group means. Indeed, the women were marginalised because of their gender, and in that sense, they fitted into the outsider atmosphere that surrounded the artistic avant-garde. Until the 20th century, the field of art had been linked to a cultural, masculine and financial elite. The Second World War disrupted this pattern and in the post-war cultural field, the production of culture was in the process of becoming common property. But it was a difficult path, not least for women. So as to survive as a woman and an artist, one had to be extremely dedicated. It was an exposed position, both economically and socially. But the trends from the USA, coupled with European existentialism and ideas of emancipation in Zen-Buddhist thought, nourished and strengthened women's self-understanding. The ideas of the movement offered shelter from the storm and gave those women putting its ideas into practice the strength and courage to create, and indeed to break free of the bureaucratic structures that surrounded them. One such bureaucratic organisation was the Landsforeningen Norsk Brukskunst [The National Federation of Norwegian Applied Art]. The Federation was not any kind of trade union, but an umbrella organisation that comprised both professionals and amateurs. "It was an authoritarian system, controlled by men who were either presidents or directors. They were never anywhere





(top)
SIDSEL PAASKE
Ten Years Before the Blue Letter (1969)

SIDSEL PAASKE
My Thought Old as the Mountains (1966). Illustration for Jan Erik Vold's HEKT.

(top)
GRO JESSEN
Sidsel's Landscape (1982).
Gro Jessen/ BONO 2014

GRO JESSEN
Portrait in front of her textile (1968).
Gro Jessen/ BONO 2014

TURID HOLTER
Portrait of Time (1976–79)

KONKRET ANALYSE
Performance Documentation (1970)

near what I was involved in," Jessen states. "Architects, interior architects and designers – all of them above us fabric printers in the internal hierarchy. We were the group with the least power." In the mid-1970s, the craftworkers split off from the Federation and formed their own organisation. Gro Jessen was an artistic and organisational driving force behind this change.

FRAGMENT

There were also obstacles in other artistic institutions, such as the Autumn Exhibition. However, the year 1967 marked a turning point: for the first time, a fabric print was shown at the Autumn Exhibition. In 1964 Hannah Ryggen had been the first textile artist to be presented at the annual National Art Exhibition, and over the following two years, Brit H. Fuglevaag and Siri Blakstad had woven textile artworks, on display under the group labelled 'painters'. Turid Holter was accepted as a member of the art group A/S Sørensens venner in 1967 with her fabric print work 'Fragment' from the previous year. The work no longer exists, nor does any photo of it. The fact that there are no documented traces of such textile works today reflects another tendency of beat culture: the process of creating the artwork was more greatly valued that the work itself. But despite the lack of visual documentation, 'Fragment' is nevertheless a work of art that commands our attention. The annual National Art Exhibition, the Autumn Exhibition, was for almost a century the sole gateway to artistic recognition in Norway. Acceptation was the springboard to membership of artistic organisations and influence in the field of Norwegian art. In the 1960s and '70s, participation was the royal route to the innermost circles of artistic life. Yet textile art and textiles as a mode of expression had no place at the Autumn Exhibition. Furthermore, the field of textile art was dominated by art craftswomen. Excluding textile artworks from the Autumn Exhibition meant shutting women out of the centre of power in the arts world. A/S Sørensens venner was a loosely knit group that arose from the impulses towards revolt and emancipation in the 1960s. The group consisted of 16 members: five of them were women.

These women expressed themselves through everything from marble, textiles and plastic to jukeboxes and saxophones. In other words, it is interesting to note that the women in the group were the most experimental among its members. They started to use new materials, new techniques and new modes of expression. In this way, the women cleared a path for themselves towards the very core of the art world, and the group thus put pressure on the entire traditional concept of art.

EVERYDAYNESS

Works by Turid Holter were shown on eight occasions at the Autumn Exhibition. The art works she displayed there tell the story of the development and conditions for textile art in Norway – and may also be considered a framing story of her own life. There is an everydayness in the techniques and materials of her fabric prints, an unassumingness that in former ages had been associated with women's lives. But it turned out that there was an emancipatory force in the field of textile

art. The female art craftworkers were able to use their field to get a grip on their own development and to give themselves a voice. Only after one's work had been exhibited three times at the Autumn Exhibition did one become eligible to vote. And an artist with such a right could take part in the innermost circles of visual art. In practical terms, the exclusion of textile art at the Autumn Exhibition had meant excluding women's voices from the centre of power of Norway's art world.

The fight for the presence of textile art at the Autumn Exhibition bore fruit, and from the mid-1970s a separate jury was set up to evaluate textiles as an independent field. To be judged on professional premises by one's own colleagues paved the way for a broader assembly of textiles at the annual National Art Exhibition, and female textile artists thus stood a better chance of qualifying as artists eligible to vote.

FRAME STORIES

We may sum up – and of course simplify – the connection between the aesthetics of the beat generation and those of fabric printing in the period dealt with in five points:

— Voluntary simplicity and a lifestyle of material poverty;
— The process is more important than the result;
— Spontaneity of expression and action; anti-academic forms of expression;
— Concentration on emptiness, on the circle and on a centre;
— Use of well-known symbols along with poetic, literary titles.

In the mid-1960s, Sidsel Paaske, Gro Jessen and Turid Holter spent a winter together, at Modum in Buskerud. There they shared a studio, developed their friendship and finally reached a common attitude towards their work. And there they also developed the strategies to enable textile materials and techniques to leave the domestic sphere and conquer the art world. Many institutional barriers were overcome and many traditional boundaries transcended. Together they formed the front line in the field of Norwegian fabric printing and textile arts. Due to the inscrutable nature of human life, they also came to share a common destiny, both as artists and human beings. All of them met a sudden, unexpected death. Sidsel Paaske contracted a brain tumour and died in 1980, after only a few weeks' illness. Gro Jessen was to undergo a simple operation, but died suddenly and unexpectedly on the operating table at the age of 63. Turid Holter was murdered, strangled in her own home by her lodger. Jessen's words to me about Paaske may be used about them all: "Their lives revolved around a wild hunt for the non-academic in art: a wild hunt for the fantastic."

'WITHOUT A HISTORY, NO FUTURE'. ABOUT TEXTILES AS MATERIAL CULTURE AND ARTISTIC MEDIUM

Jorunn Veiteberg

We're far removed from *Paradise Hotel* and *Big Brother*, but it's reality TV nonetheless: Norwegian television (NRK) has sparked international interest with its so-called 'slow television', where, without cuts of any kind, we follow a lengthy train or boat trip, or stare at a bonfire until it has burnt out. On Friday, 1 November 2013, it was the turn of needlework enthusiasts, for that was when NRK invited viewers to a *National Knitting Night*. The transmission lasted 12½ hours solid, during which time we were able to follow the gestation of a sweater, from the moment the sheep had been shorn and the wool carded and spun until the final hand-knit product. The success was overwhelming. No less than 1.3 million people watched the programme during that weekend, with an average viewing time of four hours. That's a very high figure for a country with a population of just over five million inhabitants.

The reason why I'm focusing on this TV transmission is that it says something about the position of knitting in Norwegian culture. Sheep farming has been widespread up to now, and to be able to made use of wool is something women in particular were formerly taught to do. Access to wool (and hydroelectric power) also created the basis for the industrial production of textiles, in the form of woollen mills and knitwear factories. But, like much other industry in the West, many of these companies have closed down in recent years. So it is significant in a way that the *National Knitting Night* was transmitted from Salhus Knitwear Factory. This company was founded in 1859 as one of the first such factories in Norway. In 1989, however, it was decided to close the factory down, and in 2001 The Norwegian Knitting Industry Museum opened in the former factory premises. The transformation from a commercial to a cultural institution, and from being responsible for production to conserving a cultural heritage, is typical of the present age. Even so, it is worth remembering that there are still textile factories in operation in Norway. For a number of years, The Bergen Academy of Art and Design (KHiB) has collaborated with Innvik Sellgren AS in Stryn, where students get a chance to weave samples on an electronic jacquard machine in connection with a course on digital weaving. The newspapers report that the demand for Norwegian wool is on the increase. There is also an increasing interest in preserving traditional breeds of sheep, and in recent years farm-spinning has sprung up in various parts of the country. And those at the top of the EU are talking about the need to re-industrialise Europe.

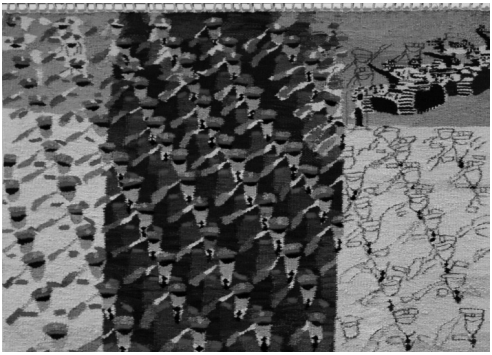
Access to the raw materials is a prerequisite for artistic activity, and among

tapestry weavers wool from the Old Norwegian Short Tail Landrace (*spelsau*) has been in demand. This, plus the anchorage textiles have in the population with so many people knitting, crocheting, sewing and weaving, constitutes an important basis for the strong textile tradition that has existed in Norway for very many years and that experienced explosive artistic growth during the 1960s and 1970s. There is of course no obvious link between handicraft, industrial production and art, since their aims and the fields in which they operate are completely dissimilar. But combined, these subareas make up a composite textiles knowledge bank that opens up a diversity of narratives, no matter whether the approach is historical, social or aesthetical. This material cultural history is something textile artists in particular have an eye for. Franz Petter Schmidt (b.1969), for example, has made the Norwegian textile industry a main theme. In large-scale installations he has often combined various types of collection materials with fabrics he himself has woven and that are based on finds in factory archives. One such work is *Til Gudbrandsdalens Uldvarefabrik* (*To the Woollen Goods Factory in Gudbrandsdalen*), which this spring could be seen in Lillehammer at the exhibition *Tusen tråder - en historiefortelling i tekstil* (*A Thousand Threads. A Story in Textiles*).

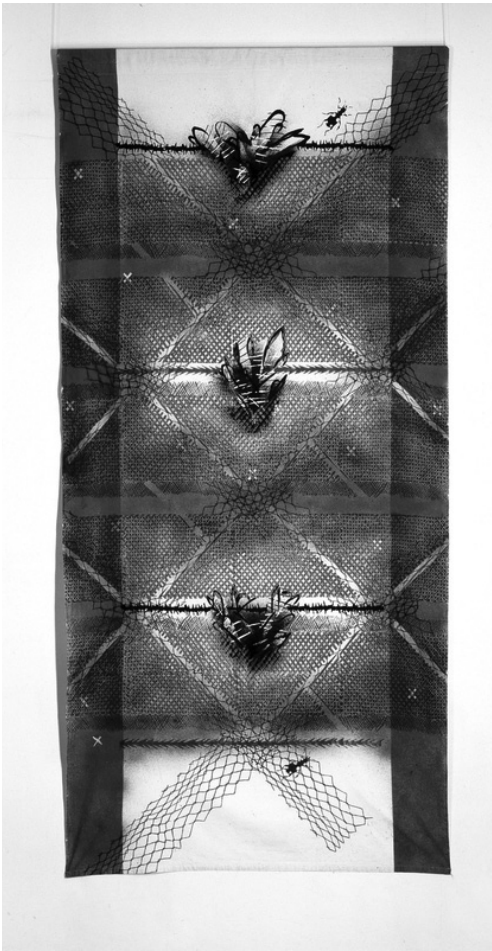
The historical part of this exhibition was shown at Maihaugen open-air museum, and is based on their collection of costumes, woven fabrics and knitwear from the 17th to the 19th centuries. At Lillehammer Art Museum they have on display the artistic textile tradition from Frida Hansen (1855–1903), Hannah Ryggen (1894–1970), Synnøve Anker Aurdal (1908–2000) to a number of present-day artists. The vast majority of them are women, a result of the fact that textiles have traditionally been regarded as a female preserve. The link between the two institutions is Kari Steihaug (b.1962), who is represented at both locations. Steihaug often remake or rearranges remains of clothing she has found, but unlike Schmidt she does not choose factory-manufactured clothes but hand-made, home-produced items. At Maihaugen, she has taken as her point of departure a box she found in the storeroom full of old, worn-out clothes. After these clothes had become too marked by tear and wear, they were put to a different use. For they were discovered in an old house where they had served as wall insulation. The installation *Magasin Maihaugen – en historiefortelling i foto, tekst og rekonstruerte klær* (*Maihaugen Storeroom. A Story in Photos, Text and Reconstructed Clothes*) tells of a different attitude towards resources than our present-day throw-away mentality. It tells a story of wearing and wearing out, necessity and frugality, but also one of repairing, restoring and restitution as important functions that crafts can have today.

DISOBEDIENT OBJECTS

A thread – to use a metaphor from textiles – runs from the use by contemporary artists of found textiles and second hand clothing in various installations to the feminist manifestations of the 1970s. To make women's work visible was a central issue at many exhibitions back



GRO JESSEN
Hello Barbed Wire (1982).
Photo: The National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design, Oslo.
© Gro Jessen/ BONO 2014



ELSE MARIE JAKOBSEN
Mene tekel (1997).
Photo: Sørlandets Kunstmuseum/ Kjartan Bjelland. © Else Marie Jakobsen/ BONO 2014

KARI STEIHAUG
The Room You're Saying We Do Not Have. Installation view at the Lillehammer Art Museum, 2013.
Photo: Lillehammer Art Museum/ Hilde Fauskerud. © Kari Steihaug/ BONO 2014

then, and at *Kvinnfolk* (*Women*), shown at Kulturhuset in Stockholm and Malmö Konsthall in 1975, two monuments in particular demonstrated where women's creativity historically have been canalised: *Slithögen* (*Throwout Pile*) and *Brödhögen* (*Bread Pile*). The former was based on a quantity of hand-knit socks, scarves and handfuls of wool. A great many hours of work underlie such unassuming products. The monument that had been built up of this anonymously produced material was not presented as a work of art but as documentation of 'women's work' and 'female culture'. Towering and yet also soft, they remind visitors of a reality that everyone ought to know about under the motto: 'Without a history, no future' and 'Onwards without ever forgetting', as Harriet Clayhills formulated it in the catalogue. *Slithögen* and *Brödhögen* simply paved the way for what cultural historians refer to as 'histories of making from below', a project that is still highly topical for many artists today.

A number of the so-called women's art exhibitions in the 1970s included culture-historical material and works by amateurs alongside art by professionals. That this was an implied critique of the elitist and exclusive conception of art held by the established art institutions is obvious. The radical political winds blowing in the 1970s led to many discussions about the role of artists and the function of art in society. In Norway, one of the strongest expressions of this attitude was the exhibition *Samliv – ei informasjonsutstilling* (*Living Together. An Informative Exhibition*). It was put on at Bergens Kunstforening in 1977 and subsequently travelled to Oslo, Trondheim and Tromsø. Everywhere it gave rise to considerable debate and attracted a lot of visitors. Its relevance in this connection has partly to do with the role of artists and partly with the use of textiles. The main aim of the exhibition was to make use of new methods to inform people about abortion, contraception, sterilisation and venereal diseases. Instead of the usual wall charts, much of the information had been printed, embroidered and appliquéd on fabrics. In addition, a house had been constructed out of textiles and a womb was made in the form of the three-dimensional textile sculpture. All of us have an intimate relation to textiles. It covers our body, it is warm and soft, and that was the reason why the group behind the exhibition chose such a medium. The informative works were left unsigned. The cause, not the art, was the central thing – and the artists worked together with students of medicine in a common desire to break down the wall of taboos that still dominated sexual instruction. This was the year before free abortion was introduced, and the feminist movement was highly focused on the right of women to decide over their own body and on the emancipation of women's erotic desires.

The collective creativity ushered in by the political activism of the 1970s thus resulted in a series of textile works that defied conventional definitions of art and design. Disobedient objects is what we perhaps could call them. In addition to *Slithögen* and the wall charts on *Samliv*, the disobedient objects also include banners made in connection with demonstrations.

TEXTILE ART

What has all this got to do with Brit Fuglevaag, Elisabeth Haarr and Sidsel Paaske? Although the differences between the three of them are considerable, there are also a number of common features. In both art and life they have been preoccupied with the position of women in general and the situation of female artists in particular.

Textile materials and techniques are also a common denominator, even though it was only one of many media that Sidsel Paaske made use of. All three have also been inspired as much by folk art and traditional craft as by contemporary fine art. Woven bedspreads (*åkle*) and embroidered banners are clear references in Elisabeth Haarr's work, boat ryas (*båtryer*) have been emphasised in connection with Brit Fuglevaag's textiles, and the influence of both Sámi and African culture is obvious in the objects and jewellery of Sidsel Paaske. At the same time, Paaske was one of the first to pass on the impulses of American pop art in Norway. Both she and Fuglevaag were part of the Norwegian avant-garde in the 1960s, and both took part in the unofficial youth biennale ('the protest biennale') at Lousiana outside Copenhagen in 1966–67. It was here that Paaske showed her gigantic versions of a burnt-out match and a lit cigarette.

Internationally speaking, the art of the 1960s is associated with freedom. The hierarchy that had reigned between various genres and materials collapsed. The first Arte Povera exhibition in Italy in 1967 was clearly anti-technological and featured natural materials and artisan craft traditions instead. In USA, Robert Morris enjoyed success with works made of felt, while Eva Hesse created installations using rope and other soft materials. Despite this, many of the textile artists felt that this freedom was not for them. As Elissa Auther has shown in her thought-provoking book on the American discussion of the artistic use of thread and fibre during precisely this period, it was not the material or the medium as such that were the problem, but how it was framed. The background and the position of the maker in the art world made a big difference as did the context in which the textiles were used. And then, as now, the discussion has to do with to what extent it is expedient to operate with textile art as a separate category, and in line with this maintain separate educational programmes and exhibitions for this type of material-based art. I do not intend to deal with that debate here, merely state that in a Norwegian context Brit Fuglevaag and Elisabeth Haarr are to be considered pioneers when it comes to raising weaving from a craft to an art category.

When they were educated in textiles in the 1960s, there was usually a division of labour within tapestry weaving. The painters (normally men) were responsible for the motif and painted the cartoon that the weavers (normally women) then transferred to the tapestry. This also applied to Jan Groth (b.1938), who is the Norwegian artist best known for tapestries internationally. Groth's shift from painting to textile is interesting. For him, it was quite simply a matter of which medium could offer him the resistance he was looking for: 'I found that paint is too wet for me, too fluid. It doesn't give

the hand any direction,' he once said in an interview. Weaving, though, is something completely different: 'To weave is to work within the rigidly rectilinear pattern imposed by warp and woof. Tapestry had all the restrictions I felt I needed.' In 1960, he discovered De Uil (The Owl) in Amsterdam, a tapestry workshop directed by Benedikte Herlufsdatter. She and Groth later married, and all his tapestries are the result of their collaboration. His exhibition at the Betty Parsons Gallery in New York in 1971 marked his international breakthrough, and his work was shortly afterwards bought by both The Guggenheim and Metropolitan Museum in New York. The Betty Parsons exhibition also toured the United States, the final stop being the Art Institute of Chicago in 1973, where the exhibition period was extended from one to six months and attracted over 200,000 visitors. Since it is so often claimed that the textile medium is marginal in a visual art context, it can be important to remind people of such successes.

The most important international arena for textile art in the 1960s and 1970s was the textile triennale in Lausanne (1962–1995). At the first of these, held in 1962, Norway was represented with *The Battle of Lilletorvet* from 1950. This was a narrative tapestry produced at Norsk Billedvev A/S based on a cartoon designed by the painter Kåre Jonsborg. The sensation at the triennale was the Polish contribution headed by Magdalena Abakanowicz. Her work had been created directly in the loom without any working drawing – it hung freely in the room and was more a three-dimensional sculpture than a flat tapestry. This new attitude to what textile art could be became normative. Poland became the country to which people's attention turned. The three Norwegian museums of decorative arts put on several Polish exhibitions in the following years, and Magdalena Abakanowicz had a solo exhibition at the Museum of Decorative Arts in Oslo in 1967 as well as at the art associations in Bergen, Oslo and Trondheim.

Brit Fuglevaag studied at the academy of fine arts in Warsaw in 1963–64, and became one of the first Norwegian artists to use weaving as a free form of expression. She made her debut at Høstutstillingen (the Autumn Exhibition) in 1965 with the tapestry *Composition* done in natural-dyed wool, where the combination of various weaving techniques created a rough, uneven surface. In the tapestry with the telling title *Against Circumcision* from 1970 the material is coarse, natural-dyed hemp that has been tied together in bundles. Even though Hannah Ryggen had also woven on the basis of her own inner vision and without a cartoon, it was not the material but the narrative that was the most important thing for her. For that reason, she stayed within a figurative two-dimensional art, although precisely her political involvement produced echoes in the work of many textile artists in the 1970s, including Elisabeth Haarr. The art historian Anniken Thue believes that is the reason why Polish avant-garde art and so-called fibre art did not have a lasting influence in Norway. To deal with feminist causes, the class struggle and similar political issues called for a more figurative language, and this fitted with more traditional tapestry techniques. Later, Haarr

has become less explicit politically speaking and her repertoire has broadened to include montages, installations and embroidery.

Hannah Ryggen was the first textile artist to have a work purchased by the Norwegian National Gallery (there was no independent museum for contemporary art until 1989), and in 1964 she was the first textile artist to have a work accepted for the Autumn Exhibition. That same year, she represented Norway at the Venice Biennale. This might seem to suggest that tapestries were guaranteed a similar status to painting, sculpture and graphic art. But things were to prove more difficult. As artists, they often fell between two stools. Historically speaking, textiles had been defined as craft, but the growing group of tapestry weavers in the 1960s identified themselves as fine artists, not studio craftworkers. 'Our works couldn't be used for anything else than looking at,' Tove Pedersen explained retrospectively. In 1970, she co-organised the exhibition 'Norwegian Textile Art in the 20th Century' at the Henie Onstad Kunstsenter in Høvikodden, which was to mark the transition to textiles as an independent artistic medium. Both Fuglevaag and Haarr took part, and the exhibition then travelled to Paris and several cities in West Germany.

To be invited to the textile triennales in Lausanne was considered difficult, but Fuglevaag participated in 1967 and 1971. In 1967, Else Marie Jacobsen (1927–2012) and Anne Marie Komissar (b.1937) also were included, while Jan Groth participated in 1965 and 1969. Karin Sundbye (b.1928) also took part in 1969. That same year, an international experimental textile convention was held in Madrid, in which a number of Norwegian representatives took part. In 1970, the artist-run Galleri 1 in Bergen was the arena for the exhibition 'Experimental Nordic Textiles', which was shown the following year in Copenhagen. Elsebeth Rahlff (b.1940) was one of the driving forces behind this, and Fuglevaag also participated here. It might seem that textile art was more solidly anchored in the visual art environment of Bergen than was the case in the capital. Sissel Blystad (b.1944) and Sissel Calmeyer (1941–2012) exhibited their popart-inspired tapestries right next to a number of their male colleagues, including Bård Breivik, Gerhard Stoltz, Arvid Pettersen and Svein Rønning at the exhibition 'Bellevue Bellevue' in 1972. At Vestlandets Kunstakademi, textile was also an accepted material for sculpture students such as Gitte Dæhlin (1956–2012) and Inghild Karlsen (b.1952). "The technique came from of a pair of slippers, quite literally," Karlsen said about the threatening figures she made from felt. Several years later, in 1982, the weaver Synnøve Anker Aurdal was to become the first woman to represent Norway with a solo show at the Venice Biennale. No walls were made use of, instead thirteen tapestries hung freely from the ceiling at various angles. In the space of fifteen years, then, textile art – at the institutional level, at least – had become part of the field of fine art.

What nevertheless made the work situation problematic for textile artists for a long time was that there were not any separate grants for textile artists, and there were few Norwegian collectors. The museums of decorative arts that had previously bought tapestries were

hesitant, as were the art museums, for was this new textile art fine art or arts and crafts? The textile artists felt it was unfair for them to be assessed by a jury of painters when they applied to take part in the Autumn Exhibition (which at that time played a much more important role than it does today). But a number of them were members of UKS (Young Artists' Society), and in 1972 forty textile artists formed their own group with their own jury within UKS. Several years later, they also gained approval for their own jury at the Autumn Exhibition. In 1976, it states in the catalogue: "As of this year, textile pictorial art has acquired its own jury, and is thus equated with painting, sculpture, graphic art and drawing." The following year, the organisation Norwegian Textile Artists was established, and Vestlandets Kunstakademi in Bergen started its own textile art education in 1978, with Elisabeth Haarr as teacher.

Sidsel Paaske represents a different type of artist from Fuglevaag and Haarr. Unlike them, she is not mentioned in vol. 7 of the standard work *Norges kunsthistorie* (*History of Norwegian Art*) (1983). In this book, art is ordered according to categories such as painting, graphic art, sculpture, design and arts and crafts, and this could be the reason why the oeuvre of Paaske slipped through the net. She is too much of a crossover artist. Not only did she make pictures using many different techniques but she also published the poetry collection *Indigo*, drew record covers, front covers of periodicals and posters as well as taking part in concerts and multimedia events. Things bought at jumble sales and other finds were often transformed into jewellery and objects. Her jewellery in particular is original for its age, and here textiles feature strongly. Tapestry weaving is perhaps one of the few techniques she did not practise. Within textile art she preferred fabric printing. In the mid 1960s, she collaborated with the fabric printers Gro Jessen (1938–2003) and Turid Holter (1936–2011), who were pioneers in Norway in moving this medium in an artistic direction.

Fabric printing has "more tempo than weaving", Jessen claimed, which was why she felt the technique fitted in better with the modern feeling for life. The retrospective Paaske exhibition at Oslo Kunstforening in 1977, *Øye-blikk* (*Moment/Eye-look*) was a cornucopia of more than two hundred works representing ten years of activity. That her sheer diversity represented a problem from some can be seen from the review by the critic Erik Egeland in Aftenposten: 'In the inner rooms, Sidsel Paaske has given us a tivoli of diverse abstract and figurative flights of fancy, drawings, paintings, jewellery, sculptures, with here and there the occasional scraps of rugs, collages and old, yellowed photographs and dilettante pencil portraits... Many people will presumably find this untamed playfulness enjoyable, full of zest and proof of a profusion of energy. And they will not be wrong. But one can also feel a trifle skeptical about this hippie style, and lose faith in such a broad array of headless manifestations." The person capable of mediating these manifestations in Paaske's own spirit was the film-maker Jan Horne. The year before Paaske died, he made a selection of what there was in Paaske's studio in the way of enamelwork, jewellery, drawings, embroidery, collages,

textile works and sculptures. He had Jan Garbarek compose music for this, then edited it all into a whole in the TV film *As when two become one for a moment*. In the introduction in *Programbladet* on 19 September 1979 the film was described as "a fifteen-minute journey in colours, sounds and moods". Her visual language was considerably inspired by jazz, and even though the mood is often blue, the motifs are highly sensual. To create a language for female desire and longings has been a core issue for feminist artists, and here Paaske's art clearly fits in with a central tendency of the 1970s.

In the late 1970s, Paaske came in contact with the studio craft environment in Oslo, and she increasingly exhibited together with those belonging to it. Even so, she became a member of the workshop sales Gabelsgate. As Gro Jessen subsequently commented: "The environment needed her disruptive form of expression – she needed a professional environment."

Today too there are a number of different professional environments to choose from for artists in Norway wanting to study the materials and techniques of textile art in depth. The Oslo National Academy of the Arts (KHiO) and the Bergen Academy of Art and Design both have textile workshops and their own textile professorship. The Norwegian Textile Artists association still exists, although many textile artists are also organised in The Norwegian Association for Arts and Crafts or Norske Billedkunstnere (The national organization for visual artists in Norway). No matter how one chooses to position oneself, I think it is difficult to work with textiles as a 'neutral' material. Textiles are too interwoven into our history and our daily lives for that. Brit Fuglevaag, Elisabeth Haarr and Sidsel Paaske have ordered this insight in their own individual ways, just as they have also chosen different strategies as artists.

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ARTISTS WITHIN SOCIETY. PERSPECTIVES ON ARTISTS' POLITICS IN THE 70S

Eva Lange

THE RUN-UP TO THE KUNSTNERAKSJON (ARTISTS' CAMPAIGN)

The Church and Education Minister Bjartmart Gjerde called all the artists' organisations affiliated with the Arts Council Norway [Norges Kunstnerråd] to a meeting concerning the announced Artist Report on 29 May. [1] The ministry had submitted its 'Memorandum 1' for comment from the forty artists' organisations invited, in which a redistribution was suggested of the state support granted to artists, the main emphasis being on the introduction of a limited share of guaranteed minimum incomes.

Two days earlier, at the annual meeting of Arts Council Norway on 27 May, I had presented the 'artists' political platform': a newly drawn-up three-point programme. The intention was to reach an agreement among all the groups of artists on a common stance to be adopted towards the ministry. It turned into quite a rowdy meeting, one at which the chairman Knut M. Hansson, who represented the 'old school', admonished us in true schoolmasterly style to behave 'decently' when we met the cabinet minister. It would be quite impolite to make any demands!

We felt that the Arts Council Norway would hardly be able to constitute the natural and desirable common forum. At the meeting with Gjerde and the Ministry of Church and Education Affairs (KUD) the representative group of visual artists put forward shared, unanimous views laid down in a three-point programme, while the other occupational groups presented their wishes and demands more in the form of 'solo initiatives', with demands that were partially contradictory. For a number of the organisation representatives, the meeting was a clear demonstration of how the authorities exploit conflicting interests and get the groups of artists at loggerheads with each other, thereby retaining control over any developments.

There was great frustration among the artists, and after the meeting, some of the 'angry' artists gathered for a kind of funeral wake at the Gamle Rådhus restaurant. There, the despondent mood was transformed into a blazing fighting spirit and a sense of optimism. The battle for the artists' report was not yet lost if all the various groups of artists stood together in a common KUNSTNERAKSJON! But we had to act swiftly – i.e. before the summer holidays! There and then we formed a self-appointed 'spontaneous' working group that consisted of the composers Arne Nordheim and John Persen, the writers Nils-Reinhardt Christensen and Martin Nag and the visual artists Irma Salo Jæger and myself.

We called an overall general meeting for 'creative artists' at Folkets Hus on 12 June. The aim of the meeting was to bring together as many artists as possible to get as a broad discussion going about the announced 'Artist Report': guaranteed incomes and a specific negotiating position for 'creative' artists. We drew up a working paper that became a kind of 'manifesto' for the action. This was presented at the general meeting, to which 220 of the country's approx. 2,000 creative artists had turned up. This was the largest meeting of artists to date in Norway, one that gave its strong approval to the three-point programme as a common artists' platform demanding the right to negotiate. There was much enthusiasm, and Kunstneraksjon '74 became a reality.

The day after the general meeting, the Artists' Report committee of visual artists held a meeting with the ministry. On the table lay the day's newspaper with a large spread about the Kunstneraksjon. Director General Johs. Aanderaa was clearly under the influence of the news. He expressed surprise and curiosity, and there was a noticeably keener interest in our attitudes and views about our occupation.

KUNSTNERAKSJON '74

Initially, the Kunstneraksjon had quite a free position with regard to organisation. The general meeting had sole authority and relied on the working committee to continue its activities until the next general meeting, which was to be held in the autumn, supplemented by representatives for writers, choreographers and craftspeople. During this phase, day-to-day management was in the hands of a troika: the composer John Persen, the craftswoman Mona Prytz and myself. Intense work was carried out all summer on analyses and issues raised in KUD's proposal for subsidies and grant schemes. Four reports in all were sent out to the organisations.

One of them dealt specifically with the problem area linked to the proposal of the guaranteed income scheme on the basis of the minimum grants that had been suggested. A working paper was also prepared to shed light on the legal aspects linked to the right to negotiate as well as on practical aspects to do with preparing the negotiations.

At the joint committee meeting with the artists' organisations on 3 September, the setting up of a cooperative committee was approved, with representatives selected from the various artists' organisations involved, in order to make it easier to control the development of the Kunstneraksjon. Approval was also given for the Kunstneraksjon to coordinate the work on the Artists' Report and the demand for the right to negotiate.

Solidarity prior to the Kunstneraksjon was really put to the test from the outset. The main reason for this was the proposed guaranteed income scheme the state was proposing. This was a juicy bone thrown out for the 'hungry wolves' to fight over, and it was also this which caused the in-fighting among the artists.

The Kunstneraksjon, with unanimous support from all the affiliated artists' organisations, maintained that the main issue was the right to negotiate about remuneration and increased use of art, and it refused to enter into concrete dis-

cussions about guaranteed incomes as long as the grant framework was so limited that it came nowhere near covering actual needs. It was also made clear to the government and parliament: "...that there is a full, unanimous occupational group behind the demands listed in the three-point programme."

And it was the visual artists, who had first urged uniting on a common stance towards the KUD, that were now going to cause the serious problems. These problems started in the visual artists' own Artists' Report committee, which comprised of Anne Breivik, Ole Johan Tørud, Idar Ingebrigtsen and myself. Disagreement arose, with myself in a minority of one. The majority, led by the committee secretary and sociologist Aina Helgesen – who gradually assumed the role of 'chief strategist' for the entire visual artists' group – felt that the approval at the 'joint committee meeting' was not binding or mandatory for the committee, and it was unwilling to comply with what it felt was a decree from Kunstneraksjon '74.

I drew up a compromise proposal in order to avoid a complete split. The proposal was accepted by the other artists' organisations and the Kunstneraksjon. But the majority in the committee refused to budge, and felt that the visual artists' organisations at the previously mentioned National Conference (Landskonferanse) had given the committee a mandate to act on behalf of all the visual artists when it came to informing and 'influencing' the ministry, even if this went against the interests of the other groups of artists. Those involved that this uncompromising struggle for interdisciplinary solidarity and a unified attitude towards the KUD were well aware of the attempt underway to sabotage the entire Kunstneraksjon project. The issue was resolved when the majority in the Artists' Report committee finally gave in to pressure from the Kunstneraksjon and the visual artists' own organisations.

A number of visual artists started to look on the energy that had accumulated in the Kunstneraksjon with disfavour, because they felt that this could impede on-going work on the reorganisation of visual artists' organisations. My own controversial position as a member of the leading troika of Kunstneraksjon '74 and chairman of the Young Artists' Society (UKS), combined with the fact that I was in the minority in the conflict-ridden Artists' Report committee made me a lot of 'enemies' in our own ranks, and eventually made my work situation impossible. From certain quarters, the cry was 'burn the witch!'.

At the general Kunstneraksjon meeting on 30 September, Irma Salo Jæger and myself, after much work 'behind the scenes', were replaced by Per Kleiva and Anne Finger, both of whom were linked to the Marxist-Leninist movement. Kunstneraksjon '74 was subsequently led by an Action Committee, directly elected at the general meeting, which was to work on external actions, and the formerly mentioned Cooperation Committee. Kunstneraksjon '74 thereby gained a solid foundation in the artists' own operational apparatus. So solid that it gradually proved to be ponderous and bureaucratic.

Towards 1976, endorsement and public sympathy for the artists' demands increased. This was mainly due to the work of Kunstneraksjon '74, which

spearheaded a broad change in opinion towards favouring the improvement of artists' situation. The Action Committee gathered artists together for actions and demonstrations, among other things against the imminent cultural bureaucracy that one could start to make out the contours of after having read the Culture Report which was now about to be debated in the Norwegian parliament.

A Nordic meeting of ministers felt that the new technology of the communications society would increase the official use of artists' works. In order to facilitate access to artists' works, a proposal was put forward to alter the copyright laws which give artists the right to control how their works were to be used, and the right to receive payment for their use. Kunstneraksjon '74 gathered together 700 artists in a protest demonstration, and managed to get the proposal stopped.

Those working on the drawing up of the Artist Report in the KUD, under Director General Johs. Aanderas, were willing to listen to the artists' arguments. The artists' three-point programme was followed in principle as a 'guideline'.

The report stated that:

— Society recognises the need for free and diverse production of art;
— The state has a responsibility to offer artists secure work and living conditions and to enable them to specialise and develop;
— The market on its own will be unable to provide all artists with sufficient work and income opportunities, and so the state must by means of various measures contribute to a certain equalisation, based on criteria of activity level and quality.

These political challenges were not, however, followed up by any practical policy involving improved economic frameworks.

The Artists' Report (Government bill No. 41, Artists and Society) was put forward in 1976 and passed on 15 November that same year. The Norwegian parliament followed the suggestion put forward by the visual artists for a funding scheme for decorative assignments. The right of the artists to negotiate was also accepted in principle.

After the Artists' Report had been approved in parliament, there were increasingly frequent confrontations between the Kunstneraksjon '74 Cooperation Committee, elected by the affiliated organisations, and the Action Committee, elected directly at the general meeting. The Kunstneraksjon had also lost support among the 'rank-and-file' artists, since in many people's eyes it appeared more or less like a sub-unit of the Workers' Communist Party (AKP).

The visual artists, who had by then established a common trade organisation, The Trade Organisation of Norwegian Visual Artists (NBFO), eventually found the situation intolerable and pulled out of Kunstneraksjon '74 in autumn 1977. Other organisations followed suit, and the action thus disintegrated.

In the period after the new Artists' Report had been debated in parliament, the individual artists' organisations fell over each other to reach the negotiation table. Since Kunstneraksjon was by now part of history, the state could once more go back to its 'divide and rule' tactics.

In 1977, the first negotiations began with the state, with the aim of coming to a basic agreement or a set of procedural rules for future negotiations. The climate was tougher when it came to the question of what should be included in further negotiations. Parliament's promises of all-out economic support to help 'emaciated' contemporary art had dwindled to the point where the state was unwilling to enter negotiations about the entire economic basis of the artists' profession, as defined in the three-point programme, and as Kunstneraksjon '74 had included in the premises for its insistence on the right to negotiate.

When the state's set of rules for negotiations with artists was approved in 1978, it only concerned agreements already reached and not the extension of economic support. This meant that for the groups of artists that did not already have agreements with the state, everything more or less collapsed like a house of cards. And the expected all-out efforts to help culture failed to materialise, despite the fine promises to be found in the Artists' Report. Furthermore, it was still easy for the state to make use of artists' services without paying them anything in return.

The current English translation of the essay is an excerpt of Eva Lange's Artists Within Society. Perspectives On Artists' Politics in the '70s *(*Kunstneren i samfunnet. Synspunkter på kunstnerpolitikken i 70-årene*) published in Else Brenn and Bjørn Nilsen (eds.), Kamp og Kultur. Perspektiver på 70-tallet, Aschehoug, Oslo, 1997.*

1

On 27 and 28 May 1974, the Visual Artists' National Conference (Bildende Kunstneres Landskonferanse) was held. At this meeting, the final breakthrough came. On behalf of the National Conference, artists would promote visual artists' views in relation to the Artists' Report directly in meetings with the Department of Church and Education Affairs (KUD). The committee was also going to author a separate appendix to the Artist Report. At the same conference, the artists formulated their demands to the government in the form of a three-point programme with the following requirements:

1. The artists require payment for the beneficial use to society of their work today;
2. Support for extended use of artists' work;
3. A guaranteed minimum income for artists should point 1 and 2 not provide a reasonable labour income.

Despite internal conflicts, visual artists had come to a common platform based on a 3-step programme, which from then on defined the state as the counterpart. The main requirement was to gain negotiating rights.

THE ART SITUATION IN NORWAY

Aina Helgesen

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It is both common knowledge and widely accepted that the financial situation of visual artists is poor. People have counted on broader education and a generan increase in the standard of living across the country to produce an increase in the turnover from art, thereby making it possible for most visual artists to live off their sales, decorative assignments or payment for their work.

But the actual present-day situation paints a different picture from the one predicted. Certain figures may shed light on the situation. If we look at turnover from art registered by means of the 3% tax (this tax is paid in to the Board of Visual Artists [Bildende Kunstneres Styre] from all public sales of Norwegian or foreign and/or old art), we find an increase of 218% in nominal kroner, from NOK 3.9 million in 1955 to NOK 12.3 million in 1970 (NOK 12.4 million in 1969). Of these NOK 12.4 million in 1969, approx. NOK 6 million, i.e. less than half, were first-time sales of contemporary Norwegian art, the rest coming from the sale of foreign art and the subsequent sales of Norwegian art. During the same period, total private consumption in nominal kroner has increased by 211%. If we take into account that part of the increase in registered turnover comes from a structural change in the total art market (i.e. better registration of turnover via better collecting of the tax and fewer direct sales from the studio), foreign art has a relatively larger share of the art market today than in the 1950s. We also find that the total art turnover has had a lesser increase in percentage terms than total private consumption.

An analysis of the prices of painting, (based on the average prices at the National Autumn Exhibitions from 1890 to 1970, shows that the average prices in fixed kroner on 1955 values) today is less than 2/3 of those applied around the turn of the century. Admittedly, we find a certain increase in the prices of paintings after the war until 1965, but part of this price increase is compensated for by the fact that the average size of canvases has also increased.

If we include the registered turnover from art, studio sales, private and public decoration assignments, illustrative commissions and grants, we come to a total financial pool for Norwegian artists of between NOK 9.5 and NOK 11 million kroner.

This economic basis also has to cover on-going production expenses for art and the artists' living expenses for themselves and their families. We may see at once that this does not mean much money per artist when we know that in 1969 there were at least 800 people in this country who considered themselves gainfully employed as such.

According to 157 interviews with artists, selected on the basis of statistical criteria (based on 951 persons consisting of artists entitle to vote, members of nationwide artistic organisations, artists with a regular exhibition activity, etc.), gainfully employed artists in 1969 had an average income (including fees) from art of NOK 12,000. At the same time, the average production expenses were NOK 5,700, which meant that the average surplus from artistic activities was NOK 6,300.

It turns out that only 5% of the artists made an overall profit of more than NOK 30,000, and only 25% had a profit of more than NOK 10,000. 25% made a direct loss on their artistic activity, i.e. they had production costs that exceeded their art earnings. Furthermore, 10% of the artists accounted for approx. 50% of the total art earnings.

Most people would agree that this sounds incredible. If one wants to form a personal impression, one may, for example, study the prices and sales at a solo exhibition. Such medium-sized exhibitions rarely have a production time of under two years. From the total sales sum, one has to deduct commissions (normally between 20% and 35%, depending on the sales venue) as well as the total expenditure for materials, frames, possibly a studio, etc. One will then discover that even if the entire exhibition is sold, the artist is left with an annual income that is usually less than a normal annual income in Norway today.

When we consider that even an artist classified by the system as 'good' (positive reviews, public purchases, grants, etc.) normally only sells part of an exhibition, often only three to four works, perhaps nothing at all, it is not hard to imagine how remunerative such a business is.

The exhibition does not just comprise goods on offer to the public, but also offers objects of beauty, of expressed emotions or reactions in one form or another. We have to realise that even exhibitions of sales-unfriendly art can be of considerable importance in our cultural life.

But isn't being an artist a joy and an urge in itself independent of financial reward? Isn't art a surplus occupation?

The aforementioned artists with an overall pre-tax income of NOK 6,300 in 1969 are for the most part individuals with a long, wide-ranging professional background behind them. The average time spent is 5.1 years – 36% have a professional training of six years or more. 80% had been students at state art schools or academies in or outside Norway for some period of time.

I am not claiming here that proficiency as an artist is directly proportional to the nature and length of the training involved. The profession of artist is perhaps an area where everyday experience, the practising of one's profession, talent and interest play just as large a role (if not larger).

But those who have been through a long programme of art training, who have often taken sizeable loans in order to finance this, haven't done so in order to pursue a hobby. They have sought to acquire proficiencies in order to be better able to practise a profession they regard as meaningful.

If it is so that we provide a higher education today for hobby activities, if it is so today that the state spends NOK 1.5 million (1970) on an art academy where one assumes that the majority of the students will be later considered hobbyist artists, where one tacitly accepts in advance that the majority of the students will *not* have the possibility to earn a living from their professional skills, well, there must be a flaw in the government's appropriation and investment policy, or a squandering of rare professional capacities – and as such this is socio-economically irresponsible.

In recent years, there have been more artists at a time when the economic system has only displayed a slight increase, and developments in society have also led to artists – like other people – becoming increasingly dependent on fixed incomes of a certain entity. According to the Norwegian Artists' Council [Norges Kunstnerråds] questionnaires from 1965, 40% of male artists in 1964 had an income solely from their artistic activities, possibly supplemented by a wife or family. According to my interviews, only 20% of the male artists in 1969 did not have some form of additional occupation. This would seem to indicate a worsening of artists' general living conditions, instead of the expected improvement from the increase in GDP and private consumption. It is almost unbelievable that artists have accepted the fact that their trade union hasn't raised a hue and cry. A possible explanation of this is that artist have seemed so far to be more preoccupied with disagreements about views and schools of art than in rallying together to deal with problems that they all seem to share, whatever their age or means of expression.

State grants for the education of visual artists and for the visual arts have seen a marked increase from NOK 2.5 million in 1963 to NOK 7.5 million in 1970. Even in fixed kroner, this represents a doubling of the amount. This increase is due most of all to the setting up of the Arts Council Norway [Norsk Kulturfond]. But if we look more closely at the appropriations, we find that the increase goes mainly to posts that represent an offering to the population. It is the public that is being subsidised by the state. The National Gallery [Nasjonal Galleriet], The State Gallery [Riks Galleriet], etc. are there for the population in the same way that the artists' own exhibitions are. Financial support to the National Autumn Exhibition and the major regional exhibitions etc. is also first and foremost something on offer to the population, but it eventually also relieves pressure on the subsidisation that artists have formerly received in terms of free administration, packaging, transportation, hanging, etc.

Of the NOK 7.5 million approved in 1970, NOK 1.5 million (20%) was earmarked for the education of artists (the Academy, district schools and the Norwegian National Academy of Craft and Art Industry [Statens håndverks - og kunst industri Skole] are not included in this figure), about NOK 5 million or 65% for subsidising the public, and only NOK 1 million, i.e. under 15%, was directly earmarked for the direct support of artists, via artists' salaries, travel and work grants, grants for older deserving artists (the latter should be seen as a supplementary payment of the state's earlier

neglect of these artists), supporting new artists and the materials fund. In the budget proposal for 1972, the direct share for artists will be even lower.

If we look at work and travel grants, which in principle are intended as an improvement to the work situation for active artists in a transitional period, we find that in total they have experienced a slight decrease in nominal kroner since 1969. In 1963 kroner values, the total appropriatios of grants for visual artists in 1970 was at the same level as in 1965.

The present-day situation is that while we have an economic basis that in theory can 'feed' between 200 and 250 artists, there are now roughly 1,000, of which 800 at any rate describe themselves as actively employed (about half the latter group had at least one solo exhibition in the 1965–70 period). The Academy has doubled its studens numbers from 1968 to the present day, which means that the number of artists will presumably increase in the years ahead.

We have to realise that 200-250 visual artists, even full-time, would scarcely be able to maintain the exhibition level we have today in terms of quantity, and even fewer also carry out other assignments for which we need people with a knowledge of visual modes of expression. In addition, we may expect the environmental impulse that visual artists offer to diminish sharply when numbers are so low.

This economic basis cannot be improved by 'natural' means – it would not in that case be a question of increasing sales, but of quintupling them in the course of a couple of years. Such an achievement with the present business structure is hardly likely – read, impossible – and even with new structures, the use of advertising, PR, etc. it would seem to be too high an aim. Such a rapid increase in sales would also lead to costs soaring, and perhaps the price of the works and their 'sales-friendliness' could contribute to a shifting in the forms of production, in short, that art would not only be an investment object but also acquire the status of a consumer object, and thereby – to a greater extent than today – be largely treated as a commodity.

Today there is thus a blatant illogicality in the government's attitude when it emphasises the importance of art and increases the educational capacity at the Academy without at the same time finding adequate means to improve the economic basis (e.g. by promising 2% of the building sum for public buildings to be earmarked for artistic decoration, increasing state decoration, increasing state art purchasing, giving more and larger grants, exhibition fees, guaranteed incomes, etc. – there is no lack of ideas from the artists themselves).

Is this inconsistency in the appropriation policy the result of ignorance or a badly conceived system on the part of the state? Or do people at the highest levels of government really believe that 'talented art is always victorious' and that a natural selection process based on commercial evaluation is necessary and desirable in order to discard presumptive artists of lesser worth? In that case, this is a liberalist ideology that belongs to the previous century, and it hardly tallies with the principles being cherished in other areas of society. It is liberalist and inconsistent:

— on the one hand to expect artists to live solely from the sales and fees for their works, and
— on the other hand for artists not to be interested in their general living conditions (read, money) or not to be influenced by their financial situation.

Today, the subsidisation of our cultural life by artists is a real phenomenon, even though it is difficult to measure this exactly in terms of money. The role of money in present-day artistic life is directly or indirectly an expression of the commercial value of the products, something that is often confused with their artistic value and importance. Greater use of the artists' specific fields of knowledge, the financial rewarding of artists' activities and the guarantee of an economic basis for artists ought to be self-evident. Then money could perhaps be first and foremost a yardstick for the real costs involved in maintaining and expanding artistic and cultural life.

‘FASHION: THE FALL OF AN INDUSTRY’ PROGRAMME

From 17 October to 12 December 2013 OCA presented ‘Fashion: the Fall of an Industry’, a programme of lectures analysing the period of the 1970s in Norway, which saw a decline of employment in the textile industry.

Through the interplay of garments, textile-production techniques and weaving processes, artists such as Brit Fuglevaag, Elisabeth Haarr and Sidsel Paaske found expression in a worldwide wave of labour militancy, developing techniques and practices fuelled by a strong sense of political entitlement.

Typically located in small communities in the western part of the country, Norwegian textile industry employment fell by 47% during the 1970s, creating a phenomenon of reabsorptive recruitment with the expansion of the welfare state as employer. While this passage created turmoil in other Scandinavian and Western countries, in Norway the role of the state became prominent, witnessing a passage of the majority of the employees from the industry into the welfare state.

Artists took different positions in their work, reacting to and reflecting upon the insurgent issues of industrialisation in its more unforeseen aspects: the need of care for both the environment and workers, the outsourcing of production and its social consequences.

When growth began to falter in the late 1960s, in the midst of a post-war crisis felt throughout the Western world, the endemic conflict between capitalist markets and democratic politics, which up until then had sustained the political-economic peace formula between capital and labour (with a combination of an expanding welfare state, the rights of workers to free collective bargaining, regular wage increases, governments commitment to full employment) led to turbulence which pre-empted and shaped a global crisis.

The programme provided a historical view upon how local policies shaped different reactions in different countries and upon the alignment of global patterns of concerns.

Thursday
17 October 2013
In the Shadow of the Beat Generation: Norwegian Textile Art Crossing Borders 1960–1980
Jorunn Haakestad

Thursday
24 October 2013
94 Years Later: Putting the Bauhaus into Perspective. On Art & Design, Identity & Gender
Anja Baumhoff

Thursday
31 October 2013
Photography and Fashion in Mali
Manthia Diawara

Thursday
7 November 2013
On Textile Structures
Rike Frank

Thursday
14 November 2013
Feminism, Trockel Fashion
Anne Wagner

Thursday
21 November 2013
On Beauty: Textile Aesthetics within a Feminist Perspective
Elisabeth Haarr

Followed by a conversation with Jan-Lauritz Opstad, Brit Fuglevaag and Benedicte Sunde

Thursday
28 November 2013
Radical Design as Resistance: Rei Kawakubo and Her Followers
Yuko Hasegawa

Thursday
5 December 2013
Division of Labour: Textiles as a Gendered Medium in Norwegian Art in the 1970s
Jorunn Veiteberg

Wednesday
11 December 2013
Globalisation, Image Production and La Javanaise
Wendelien Van Oldenborgh

Followed by a conversation with Mike Sperlinger

Thursday
12 December 2013
Costumes, Textiles, Music
Linder Sterling
In conversation with
Anne Hilde Neset

Followed by Rob Young's Live Jukebox: an audio-illustrated lecture on the connections between textiles, costumes and the philosophies of sound and performance

Wednesday
28 May 2014

String Theory: The Aesthetic of Crafts and the Crafting of Politics. Some Commentary on the Work of Goshka Macuga, Etel Adnan, Alighiero Boetti and Füsun Onur
Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev

Wednesday
4 June 2014

Phoenix Public Sphere. Man is no Private Being
Rainer Stollman

Followed by the screening of *The Assault of the Present Upon the Rest of Time* (1985, directed by Alexander Kluge)

BRIT FUGLEVAAG

Brit Fuglevaag (b.1939 in Kirkenes, Norway, lives and works in Oslo, Norway) is an artist working with both textiles and drawing. She first trained at the SHKS (Statens håndverks – og kunstindustriskole, now the Oslo National Academy of the Arts, 1959–1963) and then at the Academy of Fine Arts, Warsaw, Poland (1963–1964). Her debut was at the Kunstnernes Hus Autumn Exhibition in 1965, in the painting category with the tapestry *Composition*, and her work has since featured in various solo and group exhibitions, including the International Tapestry Biennial (1967, 1971), at the Youth Biennial, Paris (1969); at the Henie Onstad Kunstsenter, Høvikodden, Norway (1970, 1993); the 'Exposición Internacional de Experiencias artistico-textiles', Barcelona and Madrid, Spain (1970); the International Exhibition Tapestry Biennial, Lausanne, Switzerland (1967, 1971); the International Exhibition, Le Main, France (1974); 'Fiber Works', Kyoto and Tokyo (1976); the International Textile Exhibition, Linz, Austria (1981); 'Kryss – Crossing Borders', Hordaland Kunstnersentrum, Bergen, Norway (1992); at the International Tapestry Biennial, Beauvais, France (1994, 1996); and at the International Tapestry Biennial, Paris, France (1998, 2000), Kunsthall Oslo (2013); and Kunsthall Stavanger (2014). She is represented in the most important collections in Norway, which among others include that of the National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design, Oslo, that of KODE, Bergen, and that of the Nordenfjeldske Kunstindustrimuseum, Trondheim. She served as a member of the Decoration Fund (Utsmykningskomiteen), Arts Council Norway (1973–74); and was also a member of the Working Committee for Norwegian Visual Artists Association (Arbeidsutvalget Norske Billedkunstnere, 1976–80); chairwoman of the Board of Visual Artists (BKS, 1978–80); a negotiator for visual artists on the Government's negotiating Committee (1979–80); a board member of the Norwegian Visual Artists Association (Norske Billedkunstnere 1980–88); a board member of the Oslo Nye Teater (1980–88); chairwoman of the National Jury (1982–84); and member of the Norwegian Council of Culture (1992–96). Fuglevaag has also taught at the SHKS, Oslo (guest professor in 1970, and the first professor of textiles, from 1989–95) and was head of the Textile Department from 1972 to 1978; she served as a guest professor at the universities of both Southern Illinois, ID, USA (1983) and Oregon State, OR, USA (1972). From 1995 to 2012, she worked and lived in Paris, France.

ELISABETH HAARR

Elisabeth Haarr (b.1945 in Hamar, Norway, lives and works in Kristiansand, Norway) is an artist working with textile structures and embroideries in order to build a 'collective consciousness', that also determines "how one chooses to work with a subject, whether working with realist or abstract, landscape or experimental art." Haarr was trained at the SHKS (now the Oslo National Academy of the Arts) from 1963 to '67. She was a board member and jury representative at UKS (Young Artists' Society, first textile representative, 1971–74); member of the Honorary Committee and representative for UKS in the Arts Council Norway; part of the work-group to establish an organisation dedicated to textile artists (UKS, Norges Kunstnerråd, 1971–74); member of the Board of Visual Artists, Hordaland (Norske Billedkunstnere, 1975); board member of the Art Academy of Vestlandet (Vestlandets Kunstakademi, 1976); member of the National Jury (1982–83); board member of the Decoration Fund (Utsmyknings-fondet, 1982–85); member of the Grant Committee (Stipendkomiteen,1989–94); chairwoman at the Trøndelag Arts Centre (Trøndelag Kunstnersenter, 1992–94); and chairwoman at Sogn og Fjordane Artists Centre (Sogn og Fjordane Kunstnarsenter, 1995–96). She has held solo exhibitions and participated in numerous group exhibitions, especially in Norway, including 'Exposición Internacional de Experiencias artistico-textiles', Madrid and Barcelona, Spain (1969–70); 'Norwegian Textile Art in the 20th Century', organised by Henie Onstad Kunstsenter, Oslo, which travelled to several institutions in France and Germany (1970–71); Oslo Kunstforening, Harstad Kunstforening, Tromsø Kunstforening, Bodø Kunstforening, Ålesunds Kunstforening (1973); UKS, Oslo (1977); Bergens Kunstforening (1983); Tromsø Kunstforening (1973,1985); Christiansand Kunstforening (1986, 2004); Nordenfjeldske Kunstindustrimuseum (1986, 2008), Sogn og Fjordane Kunstnarsenter (1987, 1997); Gallery F 15, Moss (1988); Trøndelag Kunstnersenter (1987, 1992); Stavanger Kunstforening (2003), Kunsthall Oslo (2013); and Kunsthall Stavanger (2014). She is represented in the collections of the Nordenfjeldske Kunstindustrimuseum, Trondheim, and the Sogn og Fjordane Kunstmuseum, among others. Haarr was a professor at the Vestlandets Kunstakademi (now the Bergen Academy of Art and Design), where she founded its Textile Department (1978–80) and the Sogn og Fjordane University College (1998). In the year 2000 she received the Ulrik Hendriksen prize, awarded by BKH (Bildende Kunstneres Hjelpefond) to artists who have made a meritorious effort for the benefit of art and the condition of other artists.

SIDSEL PAASKE

Sidsel Paaske (b.1937 in Oslo, Norway – d.1980 in Oslo) was a self-taught artist whose work ranged from painting to sculpture, printmaking, textiles, drawings, enamels and jewelry. After attending a semester at the SHKS (now the Oslo National Academy of the Arts) in Oslo in 1956, as well as the Statens kvinnelige industriskole and the Statens lærerhøgskole in Oslo (the National Female Industrial School and National Teacher Training College, 1960–62) and the Académie de la Grande Chaumière in Paris, France (1962), she founded her own atelier in 1965. She would say that she had learned "something from schools, a lot from colleagues, but mostly by herself in her own atelier." Besides her artistic practice, she worked at the Oslo Prison, the Norwegian Polar Institute and the Bjerketun Psychiatric Hospital (1968–74), and in 1976 she ventured to sail around the world, touching upon Russia, Japan, the Pacific and the USA. She held solo exhibitions at the UKS (Young Artists' Society), Oslo (1966); Kunstnernes Hus, Oslo (1968), 'Galleri 71', Tromsø, Norway; the Gallery of the Liverpool Academy of Arts, Liverpool, UK (1975); Molde Kunstforening, Molde, Norway (1972) and Gallery F 15, Moss, Norway (1980). She participated in group exhibitions, including Cité, Paris (1962); UKS, Oslo (1965); Stavanger Kunstforening, Stavanger, Norway; Kunsthall Charlottenborg, Copenhagen, Denmark; Bergen Kunstforening, Bergen, Norway; Kristiansand Kunstforening, Kristiansand, Norway; Moss Kunstforening, Moss; Sandefjord Kunstforening, Sandefjord, Norway (1966); and Kunstnernes Hus, Oslo (1975). Her work is represented in national collections, such as that of the National Museum of Art, Architecture & Design, Oslo, and KODE, Art Museums of Bergen. She was a board member of the Norwegian Visual Artists' Professional Association (NBFO, Norske Billedkunstneres Fagorganisasjon), and an editor of the NBFO journal (1978–80). A major retrospective of Sidsel Paaske's work was held at Galleri F 15, Moss, in 1989, curated by Jorunn Veiteberg in collaboration with Carl Størmer and Hanne Heuch. A forthcoming large retrospective of her work is to be held at the National Museum of Art, Architecture & Design, Oslo under the curatorship of Stina Högkvist.

EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

1
BRIT FUGLEVAAG
Form II (1967)
Sisal, Jute, 70x170cm
Artist Property

2
BRIT FUGLEVAAG
The Marble Pope (*Marmorpaven,* 1969)
Plastic, 90x175cm
Nordenfjeldske Kunstindustrimuseum

3
BRIT FUGLEVAAG
Formation IV (*Formasjon IV*, 1969)
Jute, Linen, Cotton, Fishingnet, 100x200cm
Artist Property

4
BRIT FUGLEVAAG
Huldra (1970)
Sisal, 500x200cm
Nordenfjeldske Kunstindustrimuseum

5
BRIT FUGLEVAAG
Element II (1972)
Sisal, 100x315cm
Artist Property

6
BRIT FUGLEVAAG
Red Force (*Rød kraft*, 1975)
Coloured sisal, 50x90cm
Artist Property

7
BRIT FUGLEVAAG
Pink Ocean (*Rosa Hav*, 1985)
Wool, Linen, Nylon, 150x150cm
Norges Bank, Oslo

8
ELISABETH HAARR
EEC – Threatening Us (*EEC – truer oss*, 1972)
Wool, Nylon, 100x100cm
Hordaland Fylke

9
ELISABETH HAARR
Chile (1973)
Nylon, Wool, Linen
88x155cm
Private Collection

10
ELISABETH HAARR
Greetings to the silk-spinner women in Bangladesh / Swan Song (*Hilsen til silkespinnerskene i Bangladesh/Svanesang*, 1977–83)
Silk, Wool, 99,8x149cm
Sogn og Fjordane Kunstmuseum

11
ELISABETH HAARR
Mother I (*Mor I*, 1982)
Wood, Plastic, 130x210cm
Nordenfjeldske Kunstindustrimuseum

12
ELISABETH HAARR
The Eagle Tries Again (1982)
Nylon, Plastic, Polyester, 320cm (max. height)
Nordenfjeldske Kunstindustrimuseum

13
ELISABETH HAARR
Worn Phrases (*Slitte fraser – to faner*, 1982)
Nylon, 245x135cm
Artist Property

14
ELISABETH HAARR
When the Light Comes (1990)
Embroidery, Silver Foil Appliqué on Wool Tweed, 151,8x181cm
Sogn og Fjordane Kunstmuseum

15
SIDSEL PAASKE
In the Wild Cloud (I vilden sky, 1965)
Acrylic on canvas, 41,5x41,5cm
The Estate of Sidsel Paaske, Oslo

16
SIDSEL PAASKE
*Fleeing Out (Flykter u*t, 1966)
Acrylic on canvas, various materials, 85x98cm
The Estate of Sidsel Paaske, Oslo

17
SIDSEL PAASKE
Moon Mirror (*Månens speil*, 1970)
Acrylic on canvas, 92x100cm
The Estate of Sidsel Paaske, Oslo

18
SIDSEL PAASKE
Posters (1972)
Silkscreen on paper, various materials, 30x42cm (each)
The Estate of Sidsel Paaske, Oslo

19
SIDSEL PAASKE
What Do Birds Do While Sitting in a Tree? [On the backside of a poster made by Gunnar Gunnersen] *(Hva gjør fuglene når de sitter i trærne?* [På baksiden av en poster made by Gunnar Gunnersen] (1972)
Silkscreen on paper, 70x50cm
The Estate of Sidsel Paaske, Oslo

20
SIDSEL PAASKE
In Agreement with Nature (Etter avtale med naturen, 1972)
Enamel, 22x18cm
The Estate of Sidsel Paaske, Oslo

21
SIDSEL PAASKE
Above us (Over oss, 1973)
Enamel, 22x18cm
The Estate of Sidsel Paaske, Oslo

22
SIDSEL PAASKE
All Hearts Beat (*Alle hjerter banker*, 1977)
Car parts, wool, various materials, 68x100cm
The Estate of Sidsel Paaske, Oslo

23
SIDSEL PAASKE
Preparatory sketches for the *Blue Letter* (*Blått brev*, 1979)
Gouache on paper, 400x75cm, 400x75cm, 300x75cm, 138x75cm, 116x75cm, 95x75cm, 73x75cm, 68x75cm
The Estate of Sidsel Paaske, Oslo

24
SIDSEL PAASKE
Indigo (1979)
Original manuscript for the book, various materials on paper, 112 pages, 21x29,7cm (each)
The Estate of Sidsel Paaske, Oslo

25
SIDSEL PAASKE
Strangers tracks (Fremmede spor, 1979)
Collage, 50x64,3cm
The Estate of Sidsel Paaske, Oslo

AKNOLEDGMENTS

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BEYOND

THE

PLIABLE

PLANE

UNWOVEN

WORLD