

A close-up photograph of a boat's deck. In the foreground, a brass light fixture with a clear lens is mounted on a white railing. To its right, several black electronic components, possibly sensors or control units, are arranged in a row. In the background, a blue and yellow sail is visible, partially obscured by the railing. The overall scene suggests a focus on marine electronics and safety equipment.

UNDERCURRENTS

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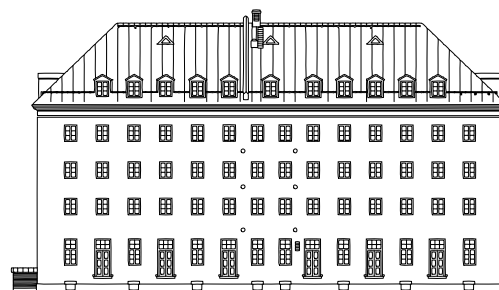
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Havremagasinet's vännar

Huvudfinansiärer:

Havremagasinet (The Granary), completed in 1911–12, was designed by architect Erik Josephson. Until 1950, the army stored fodder in the building for cavalry horses. The building is one of the largest in Boden, a six-storey structure in stone and wood with a total floor space of 3600 m², supported by 288 wooden pillars.

Since 2010 the house has developed into one of Sweden's leading contemporary art galleries. The exhibitions feature local cultural history, together with Nordic and international contemporary art.

Havremagasinet was designated as regional center for contemporary art in 2014 and is mainly funded by Region Norrbotten and Boden Municipality. The concept and operations are managed by the association Havremagasinet Art Management Group.

UNDERCURRENTS

16 FEBRUARY 2019–14 APRIL 2019

The exhibition *Undercurrents* investigates mechanisms of government and state, by examining perceived truths, and narratives of freedom, patriotism and utopia. Populist parties and authoritarian regimes today apply techniques to persuade voters similar to those during the darkest moments of 20th century history. Vague promises of idealized worlds and ambivalent ideologies lie underneath these new political movements. A response to the longing for simplification in times of an environment growing exponentially complex; for mankind, nation states, societies and the individual. This simplification is a great danger to democratic values, as it does not leave any space for the nuances that constitute our reality. Instead, by incorporating falsehood and denial into the core of their political agenda, populist movements lay a foundation for lie that gradually infiltrates both state institutions and society as a whole.

We have invited **Kalle Lampela** (FI), **Tanya Busse** (CAN/NO) and **Peter Johansson** (SE) to discuss these issues.

In his series *Utopia of a Beautiful Life* **Kalle Lampela** examines the aesthetics of desirable narratives imposed by totalitarian regimes, allowing a look behind idealized imagery into the void caused by discrepancy between reality and propaganda. **Tanya Busse** addresses the military presence in the Arctic, and its relationship to land through cold war architecture and resources extractive industries. Busse prompts us to reflect on the unbalanced dynamics of humans with nature, and gestures towards the possibility of a more holistic view of the world. These two perspectives are complemented by **Peter Johansson's** body of work, in which he is critically examining the narrative of Swedish culture and identity building, particularly with the military's role in mind.

Cornelius Stiefenhofer
director

OPENING HOUR: WEDNESDAY 12–16 • THURSDAY 12–20
FRIDAY–SUNDAY 12–16 • GUIDED TOUR AT 13

THOUGHTS ON THE EXHIBITION THEME

The persuasion of masses of people to suffer for a greater goal is as old as formations of human beings into groups, yet it remains incredibly current; especially when the greater goal is benefiting only a fraction of the involved individuals. It is essential to understand persuasion techniques and socio-cultural dynamics of ideology, be them of political, economical or religious nature. We need the majority of people in our society remain aware of the constituting values of a democracy. We have to protect these values against forces that attempt to lure us into giving up rights that our ancestors have fought for centuries, with their blood.

Lately, most Western countries have been affected by disinformation campaigns and initiatives undermining social media networks and societal entities in order to sow dissent, reactivating old conflicts and fueling new conflicts within our societies. These activities open doors for populist movements as they feed themselves on societal dissent. Everyone of us should question who actually benefits from these new and newly inflamed societal conflicts.

During the later years of the Soviet Union, the period when it became more pronounced how this attempt at Socialism had failed, when every official version corresponded with an unofficial reality, the cornerstone for untruths was laid in the Russian societal system. Today's Russian government has integrated lies and falsehood into the political structure and this has over time infiltrated large parts of society. Putin's Russia bethought itself on values and cultural features of the Tsarist Empire in order to fill the void the collapse of the Soviet Union

(and its ideology) had left in the cultural identity of the Russian society. During the last 20 years, the Russian Orthodox Church, nationalist movements, folkloristic propaganda and pseudohistory were on the rise. Russia started exporting these tried and tested instruments – in ways that can be described as acts of hybrid war, with the clear aim to divide societies. Disinformation campaigns to manipulate public opinion and even overthrow regimes has been part of US foreign policy since the end of the Second World War, manipulating information and steering opinions of the masses has always been a crucial factor in taking influence and extending power. Nonetheless, the recent attacks by the infamous St. Petersburg troll factories or GRU secret service hackers have not only caught many of the Western governments unprepared, but pose, along with the gradually debunking of meddling in the 2016 presidential election campaign an unprecedented case of challenging the last remaining superpower of the 20th century.

Sweden is a proud nation, proud of being neutral, and thus proud for its army defending the country's independence. The Swedish Army plays a role in society that is unmatched to most European countries; it is deeply entwined with the core of national identity, the historic narrative, building of national identity and patriotism. Like in most European countries, in Sweden started a transformation process in the second half of the 20th century when it changed from a state with mostly Scandinavian population into a country with citizens born all around the world. Today, Sweden has among the highest percentage of foreign-born citizens

of any European country. Countries like Australia, Canada or the United States, just as well as the South American countries, had constant flows of immigrants populating the country from their respective beginnings as modern states with centralised governments; embracing cultural diversity as the core of nation-building. For the 'old' European states, that had mostly been the point of departure of intercontinental migration during the last centuries, global migration requires much more changes to the way we identify ourselves and define our countries. Yet, societal change processes due to immigration came as a part of much more fundamental change, Modernity (and Postmodernity) changed our way of life, our values and perspectives. The role of religion in society, the share of population with higher education and of course industrialisation, consumerism, automatisisation and globalisation of our economies. To what extent then is the search for a seemingly diminishing national identity a quest into the past, a distant dream of nostalgic clichés about the own cultures' past in times of rapid change? What is Swedish today, who is it?

Sweden possesses among the largest natural resources among the European states, and to some extent, these subsequently processed resources are being refined in the Swedish military-industrial sector. Swedens iron mining industry's interests and its entanglement with the Swedish state has influence on democratic decision making. Tanya Busse reflects on these contradictory interests by introducing a local dimension into this exhibition: how do we have to negotiate the current political, societal and economical processes in order to achieve the best possible state for all of its citizens, particularly when thinking of the territories of the North of Scandinavia were questions of national interest have overrode those of minorities for

a long time? Combined with a more fundamental critique of existential threats to the existence of mankind – caused by the current economic system that fuels both resource extraction heavily affecting our environment as well as the military-industrial complex. Just like the contradiction of selling weapons as a neutral and peaceful state is quietly accepted as inevitable, the narrative of the resource extraction in the north of Sweden as being necessary for the development of the whole country has been widely unchallenged, even as it is not true in the way it used to be in the beginnings of the 20th century. Sweden has developed from a rural economy predominantly present in the primary sector to a global player in a variety of industries during the 20th century, thanks to wise political and economical decisions. Yet, from the 1980s, the country has developed a powerful tertiary sector, the service industries are the true economic force of Sweden today. This economic reality - Sweden being a leading player in global service and high-tech industries – requires open borders, open minds. Strong location factors, both soft and hard, convince businesses and specialists to stay in or to move to Sweden, where they get the inspiration and creative leeway necessary to compete in the future. Out of the unique path Sweden chose with the welfare state in the 20th century, laying a foundation for state-financed high quality services for its people, Sweden can still offer what is needed to attract relevant economic activity and development. But a continuation of investment into culture and education should not be taken for granted; it is a political fight on what role the state should have, whose outcome will not only affect one of the last refuges of nature in Europe and a rich cultural and academic environment, but our life quality and even more so the standard of living for coming generations.

KALLE LAMPELA

Utopia av ett vackert liv

Nikita Khrushchev, the leader of the Soviet Union said in the magazine *Sovétsky Soyúz* in 1962: *//Our battles and all our actions are dictated by only one purpose – to build, to create, and to work for the people to be able to always live better and more beautifully//.*

Erich Honecker, the one with the most powerful position in the GDR, said fifteen years later: *//Our German Democratic Republic will become more beautiful and socially secure//.*

The rhetoric was beautiful, but the actual results had a different echo. Intrigued by such drastic dialectics Kalle Lampela wanted to examine the utopia of a beautiful and happy life that was produced during the cold war era in real socialist publications (mainly GDR-Review and *Sovétsky Soyúz*). He was fascinated by the conspicuous discrepancy between the happy representations in the

propaganda, and the harsh and cynical every day conditions in the real socialist states, and its similarities to contemporary political turbulences. The work with the magazines became an artistic research process during which he analyzed real socialist imagery by drawing different variations of it on paper and cardboard with pencils and colored pencils in a large scale.

There was an optimistic belief in purpose – or pretense of it – in the expressions of the people Lampela drew. Their gazes were directed towards horizon, where something that was possibly becoming true was waiting. They are looking towards the highest political ideal: the realm of freedom as politically highest good and as the power of transition. We cannot know what kind of paradise that is, and Lampela's drawings do not tell about it directly either. His drawings refer to a



Me näemme vielä kommunisminkin!//We are yet to see communism as well!, 2016–2017, colored pencil on paper, 150x290 cm.

utopian, abstract, but from time to time tangible movement and political pressure, the power of hopes and dreams. As a conclusion, his drawings presents the dialectical dynamics that the real socialist utopia during the stagnation years existed only in the photographs and texts printed in the propaganda magazines, but, nevertheless that was a real utopia, printed, distributed, and shared.

Kalle Lampela (b.1973) was born, lives and works in Rovaniemi, Lapland, in Northern Finland. His artistic practice is based on research and visual interpretations on social and ideological issues that include power and utopia, especially in imagery of real socialism. Lampela's primary visualizing medium is drawing.

In 2012 Mr. Lampela earned a Ph.D. from Faculty of Art and Design at the Univer-

sity of Lapland. The doctoral dissertation addressed attitudes visual artists take toward utilizing art socially and economically, and addressed the question whether art has a socio-critical function. This doctoral thesis is comprised of written research and two exhibitions and one intervention as an art production.

Kalle Lampela currently teaches and does research in the arts as a university lecturer in visual arts at the Faculty of Art and Design at the University of Lapland.

TANYA BUSSE

The Poet's Antidote

//...to undermine, in all senses of the word. Undermining, quite literally—as in pits and shafts that reflect culture, alter irreplaceable ecosystems, and generate new structures; undermining's physical consequences, its scars on the human body politic; undermining as what we are doing to our continent and to the planet when greed and inequity triumph; undermining as a political act—subversion is one way artists can resist//.

— Lucy Lippard, *Undermining. A Wild Ride Through Land Use, Politics, and Art in the Changing West* (The New Press, 2014)

Tanya Busse's film *The Poet's Antidote* has a hypnotic quality to all three of its main narrative components, image, text and soundtrack. We see landscapes; a black beach, an overcast sky, wind in the grass, moving water. The landscape turns dramatic and as the soundtrack lures the audience and evokes emotions and feelings, the ageless images become part of a science fiction scenery. We see a cat looking at the audience and turning its gaze at the sea, then we enter the mountain, a darkness of blacks and greys.

Long conveyor belts transporting minerals underground to a factory for iron processing where the ore is washed and separated in several steps; machines spinning, bellows reminiscent of huge, grey lungs, cylinders rolling against each other, an oversized rotating sink. The camera slowly zooms out of the mesmerizing scenery, revealing a factory hall with machines which seem to have been lifted from an old science fiction film. Here, humans have become outdated and the spectator has become an observer for these faci-

lities. It brings to mind Nikolas Nikolaidis' 1987 film *Morning Patrol*, a post-apocalyptic science fiction film set in Greece, where they still have electricity (cinema, television, street lights ...) but only a few people left. It is a country where the apocalypse has washed away the past and the future.

Subtitles bring another layer of meaning to Busse's film: what is the iron for? The images don't show this, but the text makes it clear that the iron is used to produce weapons. Mining in our part of the world, in Northern Norway, is part of the war machine, and the regional politicians talk about local jobs without mentioning the whole picture. This is one of the diseases of our time; we live in a globalized society without insight into global entanglements – in mainstream politics, it's part of the game to stay focused on the positive local impact as if the world around us did not exist. As aforementioned in the film by Nikolaidis, it's a society without past or future, only the electricity is still functioning.



American writer, critic and curator Lucy Lippard's 2014 book *Undermining: A Wild Ride Through Land Use, Politics, and Art in the Changing West* points to an important aspect of Tanya Busse's work: the connectedness of local landscape and global crisis. The Norwegian-Canadian artist prompts us to reflect on humanity's unbalanced relationship with nature, gesturing towards the possibility of a more holistic view of the world characteristic of indigenous thinking: to cut a tree means to plant a tree, so the cycle of life in nature is not interrupted.

Tanya Busse's work *The Poet's Antidote* takes its cue from an ongoing conversation between the artist and a female *noaidi*, a poet and shaman of the Sámi, the indigenous people of Scandinavia and Russia. Together, the artist and the *noaidi* attempt to come

up with a spell that would destroy the *war machine*. The work seeks to confront the military-industrial complex as it is manifested inside a mountain in Northern Norway through spiritual means. The *noaidi* does not, however, cast the spell. Instead, she offers a ritual of protection, and in that sense a cure for the ailing mountain.

Busse's film may be read against the backdrop of the Arctic, Cold War fears, and the antagonism of capitalistic and indigenous worldviews. At the same time, her work transcends the local context and addresses universal issues embodied by the artist's deep concern with historical narrative, warfare and an ever-changing global political landscape.

Sarah Schipschack,
freelance curator

PETER JOHANSSON

Full speed ahead and Kanon

Many perceive it as problematic when the Swedish flag is not at the top of a flagpole. The flag and the very word nationalism are mined territory, or at least tainted to the degree that it is best not to have a flag at all. A Swede does not willingly risk treading on anyone's toes, let alone being associated with intolerance.

In the work *Full fräs (Full Speed Ahead)* the Swedish flag is in focus: a whirring, stormy assembly of Swedish flags attached to a sprawl of poles. The work swishes and whizzes, helped by small fans and larger support wheels – the latter reminiscent of rusty carriages or derelict industry.

In his work *Kanon*, Peter Johansson is taking pot-shots at the Swedish idyll and the idealised classic Swedish countryside. The work reflects a disintegrated pastoral Sweden with pierced cross-stitched embroideries of red-painted cottages. Such embroideries have been common for generations in Swedish homes.

Since 1990, Peter Johansson has been working with the comic-traumatic experiences his upbringing brought in the Dalarna

region of the 60s and 70s. Dalarna is the landscape in the heart of Sweden that since the late 19th century has been flaunted as the national-romantic face of the real Sweden, at the same time as it has been exploited with devilish precision by the tourist industry.

With a father who was a traditional kurbitis painter and a mother who ran a waffle café for ski tourists, you could say that Peter's art is steeped in self-irony and tests the limits between what is considered good art and kitsch.

In recent years he has increasingly turned his artistic attention to similar phenomena in other cultures and countries, while exploring his family's dark secrets. Above all he wants his art to affect people by being physical, direct and highly visual – and preferably also funny.

Peter Johansson calls his artistry a 30-year exploration of Swedishness. In sculptures and installations he has in an unbridled and successful way taken on cherished Swedish phenomena such as the Dala horse, Falukorv sausage, folk dancing and red cottages.

