

Tingenes metode

Delprosjekt 1

STORE TING



Photo Håkon Bergseth

I søknaden for Tingens metode er delprosjektet store ting beskrevet som følger:

Tingens metode, delprosjekt 1

Arbeidet med dette delprosjektet tar utgangspunkt i noen utvalgte objekter og samlinger av objekter med tilknytning til tvangsarbeid i Norge under den tyske okkupasjonen 1940-45. Målet er via disse objektene å etablere nye måter å forstå og snakke om tvangsarbeid på, og gjennom dette å gi nye perspektiver tvangsarbeiderne og på den tyske okkupasjonen av Norge.

Tittelen GROSSRAUM peker mot de mange store objektene som foreligger fra okkupasjonshistorien og den 2. verdenskrig for øvrig. Prosjektet vil anvende "Tingenes metode" på objekter (konstruksjoner, byggeprosjekter) som triumfbuen Hitler planla for hovedstaden Germania, Atlanterhavsvollen (et sammenhengende forsvarsverk av betongbunkere og andre installasjoner fra Biscayabukta til Kirkenes), autobahn og Nordlandsbanen, men også etterlatte arbeidsleire og bygningsmasse, og andre materielle etterlatenskaper kan være aktuelle. De reiser forvaltningsmessige spørsmål i dag. Det de har til felles er at de er store ting som ikke lar seg flytte. Flere av dem har tatt form av ruiner og preger landskapet de er en del av. De har blitt gjenstand for

ny bruk, eller ikke bruk, og gjennom denne prosessen fått ny mening gjennom nye og endrede relasjoner til mennesker og andre aktører. Prosjektet vil arbeide med spørsmål som hva slags ting er dette? Og hvilke problemstillinger er relevante i forvaltningen av dem?

I dette prosjektet vil det være aktuelt å oppsøke tingene i landskapet. Det vil bli kunne etableres lokale prosjektknuter og koblinger videre ut mot andre steder, mennesker som innganger til disse spørsmålene. Det er et mål å etablere samarbeid med museer og lokale institusjoner som har tilknytning til eller forvalter deler av slike store gjenstander. Formidlingen fra prosjektet utvikles som en del av undersøkelsene i samarbeid med BA-studenter fra Akademi for Scenekunst.

Samarbeidspartnere i dette delprosjektet er blant annet riksantikvaren ved Geirr Olav Gram. Fokuset på disse objektene kan samtidig lede til nye forståelser av dem som bygde dem og vår holdning overfor dem (tingene og menneskene).

Store ting og GROSSRAUM

”Store ting og Grossraum –” var tittelen på den første workshopen med tema store ting og ble gjennomført i perioden 5.10.15 – 16-10.15. Beskrivelsen som følger er på engelsk, fordi arbeidet ble gjennomført i samarbeid med BA-studenter fra Akademi for Scenekunst ved Høgskolen i Østfold.

Participants:

HiØ	NTM
Serge von Arx (Professor) (BA-Students) Mari Lassen Kaamsvaag Freya Hestnes Mulenga Mwansa Nicholas Zöckler Elizabet Damianova	Henrik Treimo (Project leader/Leader of the LAB) Ketil Gjølme Andersen (Curator) Geirr Olav Gram (Curator, Directorate for Cultural Heritage) Håkon Bergseth (Museum photographer) Marlijn Noback (Research assistant)



Atlantik wall, Tjøme. Photo Håkon Bergseth

How can we bring the Atlantik Wall into the museum space?

Workshop question was: How can we bring the Atlantic wall – a belt of bunkers stretching from the Bay of Biscay in the south up to Kirkenes in the north – into the museum space?

By combining competences from scenography, research and museum work the project is researching how to transform objects that are too big to be moved, into a museum experience.

The work is being done by 3rd year B.A. students in Scenography in cooperation with the museums researchers and curators of the ongoing exhibition project GROSSRAUM.

The workshop is carried out as part of the research project “Tingenes metode”.¹ The project explores the relationships and connections between the museum’s work with *things* and their reception by the visitors, as a reflection on society.

By focusing in on the *thing* itself and inquiring the inner relations a *thing* engages in with external actors, objects and places, we discover how new stories take shape. Stories encompassing people

¹ “Tingenes metode” is a research- and development project which is run by NTM / LAB. The aim is to investigate the idea that things might be understood as assemblies (of other things and actors) and to explore how this approach might lead to new understandings and connections between museum work and the public. The project is founded by the Arts Council Norway and runs from October 2015 – May 2017. Total budget frame NOK 1 700 000.

and perspectives which are not part of a presently “known” identity of a *thing* emerge into to the foreground.

To focus closely on the core of things gives space for untold stories, new perspectives and unheard voices to open up. This enhances research being carried out for example on the Atlantik Wall. Local stories and people might be a resource for a museum an exhibition. The vernacular of according places represents a complex and delicate fertile ground for research into our society. The inquiry on *things* proves to be a relevant resource to evoke new exhibition experiences.

Results

The students made five conceptual models which explore, in different ways, how the initial question of how such huge things can be experienced in a museum space. This coproduction of artistic research and academic research produced new insights into the question about how things might be understood as assemblies and what we might achieve by looking into these different relations that performs the thing in different ways. Individually, as well as together, the concepts relate to the ongoing research and exhibition project on the Organization Todt, and the results will be a resource for further work with huge things in this particular exhibition project, as well as for future museum projects.



Models on display at NTM. Foto, Håkon Bergseth

Insights from the project – a few preliminary thoughts..

A preliminary answer to the question about how to bring huge an immobile objects into the museum spaces lies in the combination of *things as assemblies* (Latour, 2005) and scenography as a catalyst to reveal what is not there for the audience to see (von Arx, 2005). As von Arx puts it, “scenography’s

main concern, is potentiality; relationships are set as frames around the unknown, to be filled by the spectators' imaginations". In this sense, the scenographer is "an architect of the illusory" (ibid: 34). We could say that every object, when approached as a *thing*, consists of relations to the world around it; relations that are played out and which perform the object. These relations are the ones that the scenographers and the curators, together with the actors performing the relations, can put into play in the museum to provide for the imagination of the audience. The answer to the initial question then is that, if this combination of content and scenography is brought to its best potential, the audience will be the ones that bring the Atlantik Wall into the museum.

During the work with the Atlantik Wall, several actors that were performing relations with the bunkers were identified. We meet the representative for an informal group of military history enthusiasts with a particular interest in bunkers in their local area of the islands of Tjøme and Nøtterøy, as well as the local representative for the Directorate for Cultural Heritage. In addition we found the marks of youngster whom at a regular basis seemed to have inhabited the bunkers as a hangout for drinking beer, smoking cigarettes and drawing graphitty, and we also observed people who used these bunker ruin landscape as a recreation site. These people are example of actors whom are performing (parts of) the Atlantik Wall today. In addition there are also non-human actors that are related to the bunkers, the landscape in which the Atlantic Wall is embedded is characterized by hilltops with an open view to the sea – at all times. The architecture and particular esthetics of the bunkers, together with the concrete from which the bunkers are made of, are also characteristic elements that perform the object in question. At another level, one could say, there are stories about the Wall, contemporary and historically, that performs the Wall through oral history and folktales as well as in the academic history. These stories puts the Wall into play in informal ways, transmitted from one generation to the next, or told to children in school, or they are published trough books, research, or movies, and certainly through the internet. Texts, photos, drawings and maps of the object perform the Atlantik Wall in a multitude of settings. A lot of this material is also stored in archives where it is being performed together with archivists, laymen and professional historians.

As we see there are endless ways in which the Atlantik Wall is being performed. All these various actors, that could be both humans and non-human, abstract and even ephemeral, like the sound of the 38 mm gun "Nero" which is still remembered for its thunder sound and for how it heated up the air above the island of Nøtterøy when fired, are related to the object. Although they are not taking part in any coordinated play, the imperative is that they all are part of the assembly of the Atlantik Wall – as a *thing*.

The project models have been on display outside the LAB, in the museum exhibition space for several months. How they have engaged visitors is hard to tell, accept for one little remark. On the poster displaying the main question "How can we bring the "Atlantik Wall" into the museum?" someone has answered "You can't!". Funny, indeed, but also it's an answer to what we can hope for; To bring immobile things into the museum, the way goes through the visitors imagination.

Photo Håkon Bergseth