

Situationists 1957-71 Drakabygget

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Fullfilled situation: Moments in life that are concretely and resolutely constructed by a collective organisation through a common environment (atmosphere) and through a game of coincidences.

Situationist: The word assigns to the theory of the practical activity in constructions of situations. One who is occupied with construction situations, member of Internationale Situationniste. (Internationale Situationniste, no. 1, 1957)

The strongest weapon of situationism is an anti-authoritative and provocative behaviour. In regard to art in society (The society in art), the double standard, the political corruption, the superintending morality of the church, the materialism of the consumer society, etc., the situationists have brought about confrontations and dialogues between themselves and society. So they use provocations as a weapon in the fight against the established stiffness, the conservative. They attack values of society that Marxists and other leftist groups in many cases have not attacked .

Situationism is international . But the exhibition doesn't include the whole international situationism. Its center in Scandinavia has been, during eleven years, the farm Drakabygget in Örkelljunga . Situationism (like surrealism) isn't only an art-ism. Those who have worked in Drakabygget have been poets, farmers, butchers, writers, dentists, doctors, artists, works-managers, art historians, truck drivers, transvestites, nuclear physicists, journalists, exhibitionists, hairdressers, sociologists, nymphomaniacs, etc. ...

Many of the situationists that we meet in this exhibition - through Drakabygget - have practically and actively taken part in provocations for "society in art".

THE THEORY OF SITUATIONISM

Like surrealism, situationism has its theory. The philosophical terminology and intellectual way of thinking, that you find in their periodicals, make, in many cases, these two -isms hard to understand. They have in common the wish to change the world.

Surrealism created new values for man. For example the dream, the fantastic, the controlled insanity, the active work of the subconscious. These should replace the stiffened life-values of the bourgeois life. They wanted to revolutionize man and the world. Surrealism cooperated with communism but it never came to any cultural political program. Surrealism starts from "the self-realization", while situationism puts the stress on the communicative (communication) .

The situationists want to change the situations between people and these situations' relations to time and space. You shall become a playing person, Homo Ludens, and create your own situations. You shall not passively take part in the spectacle. You shall not become a victim of

the capitalistic production of meaningless non-participation show. Through your demands and wishes, and the active game, you must create your new environment. This is expressed by changing the environment through "urbanist activity".

ASGER JORN AND BAUHAUS IMAGINISTA

In Alba, Italy, the Danish artist Asger Jorn formed, together with, among others, the druggist Pinot-Gailizio and Enrico Bai, "Laboratorio Sperimentale de Movimento Internazionale per una Bauhaus imaginista" (Bauhaus of imagination) Asger Jorn was an antagonist of the Bauhaus Academy in Germany, which had come to be marked by functionalism, designed manufacturing of objects and idiocy of specialization. Bauhaus of imagination wanted, through collective work, to reintegrate art with the human environment. Painters, poets, potters, architects etc. etc. were working together. The studio and the picture should go out into the street.

INTERNATIONALE SITUATIONNISTE (I.S.)

With ideas from earlier art-movements "Internationale Situationniste" was formed, 1957, by among others Asger Jorn, Constant and the theorist Guy Debord. Since then, a paper with the same name is published, which at the start was made collectively. In 1959 Jörgen Axel Nash joined I.S. At this moment the idea came up, to form a Scandinavian Bauhaus Imaginista. The idea was realized. So arose "Bauhaus situationist" Drakabygget.

2nd SITUATIONIST INTERNATIONAL

In 1961 I.S. had its fifth congress in Göteborg. To this came, among others, Jörgen Nash, Guy Debord, Kotányi, Staffan Larsson, Ansgar Elde, Hardy Strid, Katarina Lindell and Gruppe SPUR (Germany) . In the congress there were differences of opinions, which was the beginning of the schism in I.S., out of which followed the excluding of a number of members . Kotányi suggested that art, made by situationists should be called "anti-situationist", since it follows the bourgeois art in form and content. He meant that before the situationist theory was completely accomplished in urbanist programs, there couldn't exist situationist art. Only Jörgen Nash voted against the suggestion. (Then he hadn't been working as an artist since 1947, when he sculptured). Prem supported Nash's opinion by saying, that the situationists also must practice practical activity in order to, in some way, be able to infiltrate the established art life. I.S. couldn't either accept the artistic activity that SPUR was devoted to. The group was accused of "fractionist activity, based on systematic misunderstanding of the situationist theses". At the sixth congress in Paris, 1962, Jörgen Nash voted against the excluding of Gruppe SPUR from I.S. Partially because of that, Jörgen Nash, the swede Ansgar Elde and the dutch Jaqueline de Jong were excluded too. (Nash and Elde belonged to Conseil Central in I.S.).

In the leaflet "NICHT HINAUSLEHNEN. NE PAS SE PENCHER AU DÉHORS. DANGER! DO NOT LEAN OUT!", 1962, Nash, de Jong and Elde declared that they had founded the "2nd Situationist International". In this joined, among others, Hardy Strid, Jens Jörgen Thorsen and Gruppe SPUR. Asger Jorn became a secret member.

Already at the I.S. congress in London, Nash said: "Disagreement is strength". From this year on, they talk in I.S. about "nashisms". Even the periodical "The Situationist Times", started by Jaqueline de Jong, was called nashistic. In this periodical Garden Fazakerly was an important co-worker. The excluding from I.S. also resulted in "The fight for the situocratic society. A situationist manifesto", 1962, most of it written by Asger Jorn, later revised in London by Jens Jörgen Thorsen, Guy Atkins, Asger Jorn and Jörgen Nash. Signed by Jörgen Nash, Jens Jörgen Thorsen (Denmark), Hardy Strid, Ansgar Elde, Staffan Larsson (Sweden), Jaqueline de Jong (Holland), Ambrosios Fjord (Norway), Garden Fazakerly (GB), Patrick O'Brian (Ireland).

"The situology is based on the principle of social democracy in the sense that it excludes all artificial privileges. It's the only guarantee for development of disparate values without that certain talents, as happens today, are brutally used in more or less disguised slavery for the untalented. Sartre claims that one must ask oneself "what would happen if everybody would do the same as I?" We answer that question: "Everybody would die of disgust". What we want to develop is the possibility for man to reach as free a scope as possible in and for his existence, and this is conditioned by everybody's possibility to do something different".

CO-RITUS (common rite)

"The cultural tradition of Europe is one-eyed like the individualist central perspective of the Renaissance. From here you can only see the objects from one side at a time: either that of the artist or that of the audience ... "

"In the artist or the spectator it happens, says the tradition, in the sublime or the banality. WE SAY: For us art happens in the space between the sublime and the banality ..."

This claims the 2nd Situationist international. The points are number 5 and 8 in the CO-RITUS-manifesto, 1961, published during the first CO-RITUS exhibition October-November 1962 at Galerie Jensen in Copenhagen.

With this art was brought out on the communicative field. "Communication is all that brings people together. The communicative field is the space in-between. The space between people".

GRUPPE SPUR

Gruppe SPUR was formed in Munich 1958. Members were Heimrad Prem, Hons-Peter Zimmer, Lothar Fischer, Dieter Kunzelmann and Heimut Sturm. The group was in Germany accused of

blasphemy, outrage against morality, libel against bishops, etc., followed by a process, they escaped to Denmark and came later to Sweden and Drakabygget 1961, where they lived for half a year in exile. The process stirred up much interest all over Europe. They meant that the artists were persecuted as during the Hitler era. It also was the first process of this kind since that time. The cultural hostility of society was heatedly attacked in various periodicals. Nr. 5 of the review SPUR was printed by the Bauhaus situationist's publishing house: "SPUR IM EXIL".

From the January Manifesto 1961:

14. Like Marx from science has created a revolution, we create from Gaudi a revolution. (Gaudi: sly fox, joy, let go).

15. The socialist revolution misused the artist. The one-sided in this overthrowing depended on that they separated work from Gaudi.

18. From everything serious we demand Gaudi . We demand the urbanist Gaudi, the unitary, total, realistic, imaginary, irrational, integral, military, political, psychological, philosophical Gaudi".

CRUSADE IN ODENSE

The processes against Gruppe SPUR went on 1961-1962 in Munich. In October 1962, in connection with an exhibition at Galerie Westing in Odense, the Bauhaus Situationists made a demonstration in form of a crusade. The most Christlike, Jens Jørgen Thorsen, made the heavy march with the cross, which was one of the answers to the accusations of blasphemy that SPUR was subjected to. Behind the process was the Pope's legate in Munich, the catholic bishop. He had suggested an apology, which the group refused to make.

The cross was a manifestation of the inconstancy of life. Art alludes to life and death. You can only create art if you know that you die a little every day. "You see" said Nash "it's the humorist on the cross - or the space-man that never came back".

EXHIBITION AT GALERIE JENSEN

In 1962 CO-RITUS arranged an exhibition at Galerie Jensen in Copenhagen. An exhibition against the passivity of man. For collective creating. The rooms were empty. No paintings were on the walls, no sculptures on floors or platforms. But there was material for the audience to create their own environment. (5 boxes with toys, 5 boxes with paint, paper, brushes, 10 boxes with scrap). People came and people created. All the art was given away. But the Department of Education protested that they didn't charge for the works. The Artist National Organisation protested that the positive position, that was building up for the artists, was dirtied through this action.

URBANIST THEORY BY CONSTANT AND PRACTICAL URBANISM BY CO-RITUS

Constant started urbanist experiments 1954. In I.S. they talk about the uniting urbanism (uniting all activities). "Uniting urbanism = the theory of a planned use for art and technique to contribute to the complete construction of an environment in dynamic connection with experience and patterns of behaviour". Constant writes: "Uniting urbanism is against that people get stuck in certain places in the city / ... / New Babylon is the world of Homo Ludens / ... / In the new cities that will surround us there will come up an interminable variation of feelings, and of new games that will be possible at renewed use for material environments. / ... / The environment shall regularly and consciously change with all technical aid. With special equipment by a special people of ideas. These people of ideas become the first professional situationists".

Jens Jørgen Thorsen thinks that Constant's vision is a help in the creation of the social space. But since New Babylon is so complete, it contributes to the passivity of man. The planned use for art and technique, that I.S. talks about, is also only contributions to enlarging the classical art. If you can't continuously change the city plan and dissolve the fixed passage through the city, you don't take part in the creating, playing process to form a social space. "Urbanism is communication". "Let's make the whole world a radiant studio for the new art".

A GREY BOARD FENCE

Then the situationists (among them Gruppe SPUR) went out into the streets of Copenhagen. (This was in relation to the exhibition at Galerie Jensen 1962). Around Gutenberg's house, the strong-hold of the coloured weekly magazines, there was, since several years, a grey board fence. On a dark night the situationists closed off the street, and put the stately Dieter Kunzelmann in police uniform as guard. They painted the 300 metres long board fence in sharp colours and wrote slogans against the rigid cultural politics. In the morning the participants were arrested. They were fined and ordered to repaint the board fence. The event was unique. The theory of situationism had been carried out practically, for it became theater through the participation of the police, the actions of the painters, with police cars as coulisses [settings]. A street spectacle!

In 1963 the action was repeated. The happenings had effect. Young artists at the Academy of Copenhagen nowadays are commissioned to do board fence paintings. There should not exist any grey board fences in Copenhagen. Den Kongelige Porcelainsfabrik (the Royal China Factory) 1964 commissioned the situationists to decorate their board fence in Strøget (the walking street in Copenhagen), where 250 000 people pass by every day in the summer. (The fence was there for three weeks). From sewing machines they made a big music machine with tin lids, cymbals, wood pieces etc. The police closed it, though, time after time, since the sewing machine wasn't approved by the work safety law. In 1968 the town Eskilstuna asked

the situationists to paint a board fence there, which they did. Asger Jorn dissociated himself from the board fence paintings already after the first action.

THE SPIRAL LABYRINTH IN MALMÖ

In Internationale Situationniste much has been written about the "derivative labyrinth". They expressed themselves with the help of Marx's alienation concept, and meant that man was alienated from the modern city. But by passing through the city after the scheme of a derivative labyrinth, the passage gets imaginative and the alienation disappears. Like "passing through Paris after a map over Stockholm".

At the exhibition "Facett 63" in Maimö townhall, Ray Lindqvist, Jörgen Nash, Hardy Strid and Jens Jörgen Thorsen built a spiral labyrinth, which the audience should participate in creating. "The spiral labyrinth shows/ ... / That a plan very well can have the qualities of a labyrinth without being confusing. It absorbs the person, because the one, who wants to force his way in, cannot get out, but it isn't hopeless, for everyone who wants to get out, can get out. In this the spiral labyrinth also is different from the Hegel spiral, which has had a certain importance for one of the theorists of situationism (Asger Jorn) as a symbol for development. The Hegel spiral goes forever outwards, like a screw without end and makes the picture of all development to the picture of a never-ending prison.

Our spiral labyrinth is the possibility for modern people. The one that wants to force his way ahead must stand alone with himself in the middle of the labyrinth . The one who wants to be together must go out, where there is room for more and possible to cooperate. The one that doesn't want to join in the CO-RITUS of the spiral, its creating game, can just go out".

THE KRW-GROUP AND URBANIST SCULPTURE

To the exhibition came the KRW-(Kronkvist, Rooke, Wahlöö)-group from Maimö, and they got interested in the CO-RITUS urbanist action. In the summer the group let build a giant urbanist sculpture, consisting of, among other things, a lot of old boards, that they let put up on Stortorget in Malmö.

The idea with the urbanist sculpture was used again by CO-RITUS and the KRW-group in connection with an exhibition in Nyköping, Falster. But the inhabitants didn't understand anything of the enormous anti-object, that was built on the square. And the urbanist anti-object was destroyed by teddy-boys bought by the burghers [citizens] in the town.

ÖRESTAD CONFERENCE

In 1964 there was a situationist session on Ven. To this came: Jens Jörgen Thorsen, Jörgen

Nash, Mette Aare, Novi Maruni, Lis Zwick, Hardy Strid, Björn Rosendal, Bengt Rooke, Per Wahlöö, Maj Sjövall, Rolf Kronkvist and Siviä Kronkvist. At the session the present and future life of Örestad was discussed, after which an open letter was sent to Nordiska Rådet: "...With this we want to let know that we have taken the responsibility for the peripeo [symbolic environment] of Örestad (the animating of environment). The public attitude has earlier been, that the peripeo of a Scandinavian society in some way would be created by import, with the help of impulses from outside. We know this is wrong. The spirit and life of a society - or a country - is created by the people that live there. So we have taken over this responsibility from politicians and culture contractors, that they have proved to be completely incapable of managing. /... / We think that art must be open for everybody. The economical independence and freedom of the art and culture in relation to the political apparatus of the state administrations shall be settled and made possible".

So Ven was subject to urbanist activity. They let put together a collective report, where they put the expansive communication project in contrast, to for example Groupe Espace in Biot and the urbanist experiments of the constructivists in the early revolutionary Russia. They wanted to invite people from the whole world to create an urbanist environment on Ven. Outlines for the building of Örestad, though, were only made by Hardy Strid and Björn Rosendahl .

GRUPPO SETTANTA

Gruppo Settanta was formed in 1964 in Florence. One of the members of the group, Roberto Malquori, lived for a while in Drakabygget and has been the best contact between Sweden and Italy. Gruppo Settanta consists of: "multispecialists" (architects, poets, workers, artists etc.) that like the situationists work collectively for integrating the art in society. They have arranged several important congresses, for exemple about "art and technology" where they have brought forth the absolute need to integrate technologists and workers in the creating of art.

ART AS RITE

The CO-RITUS group happened to be invited to a church conference in Uppsala 1964, because of the 800 year anniversary of the archiepiscopal see, with the theme: Art as rite. Elisabet Hermodson and the other hosts had probably not expected the manifestation, made by the situationists where they appointed themselves God's sons on earth, or the proclamation, that CO-RITUS issued in the leaflet "Love at first sight": "When the Protestant church and the Pope in Rome today invite modern art for a conference, it is - self-evidently - only to steal from it. The acting of the church as a cultural pocket thief is an indication of, that it now not only is situated on the graveyard, but on the very edge of the tomb. There it leads a spasmodic

existence as fashion house through stealing from the go of life. The artist of our time doesn't use the projection God and can therefore realize new rituals, new possibilities for life".

But on the meeting the second CO-RITUS concert was produced, which called forth more happiness than the leaflet. A jazz group participated. Four film projectors were there and a giant scrap-organ, that could be played by ten people at once. The participants had brought instruments. The situationists want, through CO-RITUS concerts and anti-happenings, to make people part of the spectacle. They say they are opponents of happenings. They don't want to be in any saloon-happening or gallery-happening where people passively watch a somewhat different spectacle. So is, for example, FLUXUS exclusive.

FILMSITUATIONIST FESTIVALS

To create a new forum for exposing film production, the situationists have arranged a series of film situationist festivals. Through these they oppose to the fact that the freely creating film has no chance in the fight against the traditional film companies. The first festival took place in Örkellunga 1964. Here the Scandinavian first-showing of, among others Chris Marker and world's first showing of Wilhelm Freddie took place. They had difficulties getting admission to locations and were at several occasions forbidden to show the films in public. Above all "Pornoshop" by Jens Jörgen Thorsen met strong protests both in Sweden and Denmark. In Copenhagen there was arranged in 1965 "an illegal festival in protest against the Danish film censorship" with a series of Scandinavian first-showings of modern freely created film.

DEMONSTRATION FOR JOY OF LIFE

One of the most remarkable demonstrations that has taken place in Scandinavia, was arranged by CO-RITUS on Ströget 1965: "Demonstration for the artistic freedom of speech". At five o'clock on a beautiful August evening they rushed out at a pre-arranged signal, out on Ströget and among other things posted the big Ströget-painting, that is now kept in Arkivmuseum in Lund. 80 folk singers and musicians were engaged, among them Paul Dissing and Caesar. 3000 people were dancing and singing. The action was later named "Demonstration for joy of life".

In 1966 another Ströget-action was made, where Hardy Strid, Jens Jörgen Thorsen, Bengt Rooke and others constructed a walking collage, which was arranged like this: They built up a sculpture, broke off parts from one end of it and put them back on the other end. Thus the variable sculpture walked along Ströget.

THE LITTLE MERMAID

"The murder" of the little Mermaid is an anti-happening. Rather than committing an act himself, Jörgen Nash wrote a lying historical poem about the murder of the little mermaid, thanks to

massmedia's eagerness to create it. "They can't get into their heads, that this is the story of the century. That I'm busy writing the greatest adventure in the world. H. C. Andersen wrote his adventure about the little mermaid with a quillpen. I write about the new Mermaid with teleprinter, grapevine, television, radio, newspaper and so on".

The Danish homicide department was astonished by Jørgen Nash's exact knowledge of how the murder was done. It tallied with the technical investigation of the scene of the crime. They looked for the head in Drakabygget, at Hardy Strid's place in Halmstad, in Lis Zwick's place in Horsens. A Norwegian sea-captain got angry when he discovered a collage with an advertisement picture of himself as a portrait of the murderer. The story spread all over the world. Drakabygget was occupied by journalists, and Nash promised to reveal the murderer in nr . 5-6 of "Drakabygget" . The number came (the first issue with unwritten pages) but gave only an explanation of the anti-happening . In 1974 the perpetrator can be revealed. Then the crime will be prescribed. "The man that was buried alive" was an anti-happening of the same kind, in 1968, where the press took care of the poetry and all PR.

PIGS AND POULTRY - OR CHRISTMAS HYSTERIA AND FRANCO

At an anti-happening in Århus in 1970 Nash and Thorsen promised that they should slaughter the little Christmas pig Helge. Like a hen, that had been slaughtered in protest against the Franco regime, little Helge should be slaughtered in protest against the hysteria of the consumer society, which the spoiled students accepted. The opposition was violent and the Danish S.P.C.A. raged. The Finance Ministry of the government (the highest organ in the parliament) decided in a meeting that the cultural ministry should never again give any money to the pig slaughtering artists.

THE BIENNAL IN VENICE 1968

The situationists have led a constant struggle against the established and commercialized art. The Art Academy had been occupied by students in February, 1968 in protest against the policy of the Academy. In May, Nash and Thorsen sent out leaflets threatening to act as guerillas at the Biennial. With false press cards they forced their way into the area and occupied the closed, guarded Swedish pavilion. It was said: "This year they don't exhibit art, but policeman". Together with Gruppe Libertal from Göteborg the people from Drakabygget forced their way in and declared (which they did in a Swedish television taping, that they broke into) that they wanted to make the pavilion a center for the uproar.

SITUATIONISM AND THE REVOLT

Situationism is directly tied to Anarchism. In his unpublished book, "Anarchism and Eroticism

in Modern Art", Jens Jørgen Thorsen writes that Anarchism and modern art came at the same time. Courbet, who was an anarchist, launched realism, which succeeded the old idealistic art, and with that modern art starts. The Situationists are opposing the capitalist society, but can't accept a reconstruction of socialistic type either. They mean that socialism has failed, especially with the cultural politics, failed in activating to creating. The situationists have played a great part in the student movement. Some of the first student riots, in Strassbourg 1966, were organized by situationists that were later excluded from I.S. by Debord. During the last year four Mexican situationists have lived on Drakabygget, of which some took part in writing the leaflet CAOS (Comité Anti-Olympico de Subverción). You can read in I.S. nr. 12: "... Throughout the world there is a radical movement that declares war against the old society, from the Mexican extremist group CAOS, which during the summer 1968 asked for sabotage against the olympic games and against the 'spectacular consumer society', to the inscriptions of the walls ..."

The Mexicans in Drakabygget have written the text to the next number of "Drakabygget", that will discuss the youth uproar in the world.

SOMETHING ABOUT ART CREATED BY SITUATIONISTS

The Bauhaus situationists are, as distinguished from the theorists around Debord, positive to visual art as a means of expression. The artists followed in form and colour a tradition from the COBRA-group and Asger Jorn, which shows that the renewing of painting hasn't had so much importance for them. This is true especially of the years 1961-63, when they, as most, worked collectively at Drakabygget. (Afterwards the artists have developed, everyone in his way, in different directions).

The wish to work with the chance, the game and the non-serious, contributed during these years to give the art such a momentary (situationist) character. The wish wasn't to create art, but to create together in a collective, for a new culture. They were not interested in their own characteristics, so many of the artists' works don't have any differences worth talking of. They showed the lack of respect for the picture as an individual expression with falsifications. At the carnival in Lund 1966 Carl Magnus, Hardy Strid, Jørgen Nash and Jens Jørgen Thorsen manufactured paintings by Chirico, Kandinsky, Jorn etc., that were distributed free in the streets.

Like the situationists make anti-happenings and call themselves anti-specialists, they create anti-objects. In this lies a tradition from Dada, who was against all art. The dadaists chose objects by chance that they exhibited without connection with their former functions. For example Duchamps' "bottle drier" and Jean Arp's collages of found paper pieces. Among the situationists for example Ansgar Elde makes ceramics in sardin cans, Strid makes useless playing machines, Prem makes reliefs of found wood pieces and Nash makes assemblages of

painted objects. "Like the town population has the right to change the town, like the spectator has the right to change the picture, the artist has the right to change the objects. We don't want to make objects. We are not objective. We are subjective!"

Lund in April 1971 - Elisabet Haglund - Kristina Garmer