

April 2023

---

Dear friends,

I'm writing you at the end of April. There's a sense in the air that spring is on its way, not least as the light has begun its return. Within Samlande tankar/Collecting Thoughts I've spent time on grants that will enable collaborations and events. Writing grants entails figuring out where a project might go, but it also means looking back to the original conception of a project and, more concretely, seeing how it's evolved.

Change is part of the process for Samlande tankar/Collecting Thoughts. My colleague at Grafikens Hus, Anna Jönsson, likes to remind us that it takes courage to stay with the process, as us humans tend to want to move along to delivering the final result. But in Samlande tankar/Collecting Thoughts we try to both stay with the process and move forward. This requires trust, in the colleagues within the project, like the expert council group, and in the process itself.

The most recent expert council meeting took place at Folkrörelsernas Konstfrämjande (the People's Movement for Art Promotion), where we were given a presentation of the organization's history as it relates to graphic print. This follows previous presentations of the graphic art collections at two government agencies, Statens konstråd (Public Art Agency Sweden) and Moderna Museet; now the time had come for the expert council to visit an independent organization and hear about their connections to graphic art and the work with their collections of the same. Per Hasselberg and Niklas Östholm from Konstfrämjandet explained what role graphic art has played for the organization and discussed the way graphic art was used in cultural politics in the 1950s through to the 1970s.

Folkrörelsernas Konstfrämjande was formed in 1947 by the big people's movements of the time and was tasked with exposing and offering art to new social groups through exhibitions, with a special focus outside the big cities. In collaboration with educational organizations like ABF (Workers' Educational Association), as well as Nationalmuseum, "art of good quality" was to be disseminated to the general public, a project that was both about broadening access to art and opposing "Hötorgskonst", defined as mass-produced industrial prints on canvas—think oil paintings of hat-wearing, pipe-smoking fishermen or weeping children. Konstfrämjandet's production and

---

---

distribution of graphic art almost had the function of a mail order company and grew over the course of many years, but it was unsustainable in the long run, resulting in bankruptcy in 1992. Today the organization's work is characterized by various larger and smaller art projects, without including graphic art.

Previous expert council meetings have discussed how artworks in a collection risk being transformed into value-creating objects, thus contributing to the commodification of art within an economic system. For this reason I brought an abridged version of Guy Debord's manifesto *The Society of the Spectacle*, chapter 2: "The Commodity as Spectacle" (1967). Hopefully this text functioned as a reminder that the question of commodification and art's part in it is an ongoing discussion. I also brought *Every Ocean Hughes'* (published as Emily Roysdon) queer manifesto *Ecstatic Resistance* (2009), thinking it might open up for a discussion about the impossible. The manifesto is part of an artistic project and inspired an interesting conversation. Might *Ecstatic Resistance* be helpful for seeking to move away from the static and objectifying and toward a more fluid collection and archive? Perhaps an answer can be found in a core argument of the manifesto: "the impossible always arrives". This to me is important to keep in mind when we have an understanding of what an archive should and must be. Might we think beyond the framework that defines an art collection as something that only categorizes and preserves art works as objects? What is the impossible when it comes to working with collections and acquisitions? Can we imagine the impossible becoming possible? The idea of the impossible has certainly been actualized in the move toward repatriating artefacts stolen from the global south and indigenous peoples: that which western museums thought was impossible has, ultimately, turned out to be possible.

Another question that's central to this project is what collections and archives can be to the general public. Ultimately this also speaks to what kind of institution *Grafikens Hus* wants to be when the doors to the new museum open. During one of our meetings, artist Munish Wadhia posited that we should "keep doing things instead of keeping objects." This links back to the question about how works in a collection risk becoming objects that are kept and preserved, and Munish's coinage is an important contribution to what a collection or a museum might be—beyond statistics and something that encourages interaction, community, creation.

---

---

Many museums struggle with a lack of space as their storage facilities aren't infinite, a challenge that contributes to the question of what a collection and a museum can do and actually are doing beyond the common approaches. Perhaps a collection might grow slowly and over time, putting the doing in focus. In the doing it is possible to practice the postcolonial and intersectional, two perspectives that Samlande tankar/Collecting Thoughts stake a claim to within the framework of the project.

I also had the chance to visit Röhsska Museet (Museum of Design and Craft) in Gothenburg, where I was given a tour by the intendent Olivia Berkowicz, who alongside her colleagues Oscar Vilhelmsson (museum assistant) and Susanne Stenbäcken (conservator) showed me their archives of bookbinding, letterpress, ex libris, posters, and graphic prints. More about this visit in a future monthly report : )

/Macarena Dusant

Samlande tankar/Collecting Thoughts  
Process leader and Curator

Translation from Swedish by Kira Josefsson