

June 2023

Dear readers,

This is the last monthly report before the summer holidays. The project term ends on August 31st; still, my mind is drawn to summarizing the year that's gone by. I took over as the process lead after curator Mmabatho Thobejane in September of 2022, which feels like forever ago. My notes allow me to revisit the initial plans I drew up, and in hindsight it is clear that the project plan I created at the start of my work on Collecting Thoughts served less to organize the project than to get a handle on it. Certain aspects and activities I had initially planned were ultimately scrapped for lack of time, or because they seemed less relevant once the project was pushed forward and in various directions by everyone involved.

Though the work of the artists-in-residence has been central to the project's evolution, I have not previously touched on this in my monthly reports. In December, Collecting Thoughts' new two-year term artist-in-residence Johnny Chang gave a presentation to the expert council, sharing his approach to the project. Johnny's work is interdisciplinary and multilayered, and his primary interest lays in various kinds of gathering within self-organized archives and libraries. Through this interest in "gathering" (a term with broader connotations than merely collecting or controlling objects), and gathering's aesthetics, conditions, and terms of access, he's explored how archives create distinct forms of agency, resistance, and collective un/learning processes. In early June, Johnny gave a performance lecture as part of a public program at Hägerstensåsens Medborgarhus. The London-based organization MayDay Rooms (introduced to me by Johnny) had also been invited to give a presentation. The result was a discussion around various types of methods, possibilities, and limitations for and to gathering, as well as around different types of gathering for and by movements and marginalized groups. The event program was created in conjunction with curator Alba Folgado's project A Movement to Hold, Hägerstensåsens Medborgarhus, and IASPIS (The Swedish Arts Grants Committee).

Another artist-in-residence is Afrang Nordlöf Malekian, who's spent the year exploring Penninglotteriet, one of Sweden's oldest and best-known scratch-off lotteries. Between 1995-1998, Grafikens Hus collaborated with a group of artists to create 75 graphic prints for Penninglotteriet, which reproduced these works in miniature on

each scratch-off ticket. The gambler wagers a small sum of money, hoping to win more; the art becomes a bonus. Though the result is usually a loss of money, the lottery functions as a channel for hopes and dreams of a better future.

One of the missions of Collecting Thoughts is to embed the knowledge created through this work into the body and structure of the organization, such that the knowledge is implemented as competence in the employees. This is an important and enjoyable part of my work, and to my mind, this entails making sure that the team at Grafikens Hus is able to think about what the organization might look like in the future. We do this through internal reading groups that focus on critical texts from intersectional and postcolonial perspectives. These reading groups help in creating a relevant, communally held knowledge base within Collecting Thoughts. It frequently strikes me that regardless of what kinds of gathering or collecting method(s) this project contributes to, it's not possible to disconnect the project from the organization itself. One example is fostering a greater understanding of how decisions are made, which means that we've held discussions both internally and within the expert council group about things like: What art productions, such as exhibitions, are already being made? How are these made? How are the decisions made? These questions, brought up within the framework of Collecting Thoughts, have fostered good conversations.

Over the course of this past project year we've activated one of our most important collaborative partners: Statens konstråd (Public Art Agency Sweden). This is a long-term collaboration, taking its starting point in the agency's graphic arts collection, which contains many duplicates that might be shared with a greater audience through a transfer to the new collection held by Grafikens Hus. Collecting Thoughts also has the chance to approach the archive at Statens konstråd as a case study—that is to say, as a way to try out different modes of selection based in postcolonial and intersectional practices. Such experimentation is already underway in the work of Afrang Nordlöd Malekian, who will present a slice of his residency project this fall in an exhibition and an adjoining performance at Statens konstråd. The exhibition will explore the connections between graphic arts, Penninglotteriet, and the capitalization of people's dreams. Afrang also looks at the dreams and aspirations historically created and communicated—but never fully realized—in graphic arts, such as the dream of a democratic socialist society.

A recurring question concerning the acquisition of new works in collections is the lack of information around acquisition history and, when it comes to graphic arts, information about the work itself. Moderna Museet’s graphic arts collection, for example, does not contain such information; Annika Gunnarsson, curator for drawings and prints at Moderna Museet, notes that there is currently no system for documenting acquisitions, which makes it difficult to archive such information. Something that has stuck with me is Annika’s note that institutions have historically collected “likewise”—that is to say, the art acquired was like what was already there, and chosen through a homogenous knowledge base (white, male, Western). The expert council discussed the need to acquire based on other premises; “otherwise”. A multitude of questions follow: what does otherwise mean, and what does it mean to think otherwise from the dominant thought of our times?

Wishing you a nice summer,
Macarena Dusan

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