



THE EMPIRE OF LOVE

ALTERNATIVE
RELATIONSHIPS
AND OTHER
POSSIBILITIES

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UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG
VALAND ACADEMY

THE EMPIRE OF LOVE: ALTERNATIVE RELATIONSHIPS AND OTHER POSSIBILITIES

A symposium with Erika Alm and Ellie Nordfeldt, Katarina Bonnevier, Mathias Danbolt, Al Masson and Transmilitanta Brigaden. Convened and facilitated by Mary Coble, Sara Jordanö and Carlos Motta.

Activists, artists and thinkers will deliver performative presentations about the ways in which affective, emotional, love and friendship relationships are affected by normative approaches to equality and justice common to mainstream LGBTI politics internationally. In a time when sexual rights have largely come to signify marriage rights and a panoply of social benefits become available to those same sex couples that ratify their commitment in the eyes of the State, what forms of relating have been overlooked, ignored or declared illegitimate?

From a critical perspective accepting to the legalizing power of the State may jeopardize personal and collective freedoms in profound ways that influence society and culture, what are these consequences? How does one feel love? How does one experience heartbreak or loss? Are feelings also regulated by bourgeois normativity? Can a space of affective and critical resistance be reclaimed? Can we return to communality, marginality, promiscuity, broader notions of the family, non-binary relations, etc. as “respectable” ways of life? What is an alternative relationship? Are there other possibilities?

Sunday, January 25 2015, 11.00 - 17.30
Valand Academy, Glashuset, University of Gothenburg

The symposium is organized by Valand Academy, Röda Sten Konsthall and The Hasselblad Foundation in Gothenburg.

SYMPOSIUM SCHEDULE

10:30–11	Registration and coffee
11–11:05	Welcome by Mick Wilson
11.05–11: 25	Introduction by Mary Coble, Sara Jordenö and Carlos Motta
11:30–12.15	Erika Alm and Ellie Nordfelt
12:15–13:00	Katarina Bonnevier
13.00–14.00	LUNCH
14:00–14:45	Mathias Danbolt
14.45–15:30	Al Masson
15:30–16:15	Transmilitanta Brigaden
16:15–16:30	Coffee Break
16:30–17:30	Extended discussion

Facilitators: Mary Coble, Sara Jordenö and Carlos Motta

PRESENTATIONS

11:30–12.15

Erika Alm and Ellie Nordfeldt

What's sex got to do with it?

In times oriented towards politics of assimilation, representation, and state recognition, we find it urgent to address the fact that the subversive potential in queer intimacies is often attached to different aspects of sexuality, as if the very potential for cultural change is anchored in non-conformative sexual identities, sexual relations and sexual expressions themselves. Sexuality is positioned as that which identifies the subject as non-conformant but also as that which is the foundation of its queerness, that which will set it free from normative structures. With such a focus on sexuality as the driving force for cultural change it is very important to keep a critical eye on the taken for granted assumptions about the relationship between sexual identity and gender identity and gender expression. How do cisnormative and gender binary ideals structure not only heteronormative politics of recognition and oppression, but also homonormative assimilation politics, and sometimes even queer radical politics of subversion?

BIO

Erika Alm is assistant professor in Gender Studies at the University of Gothenburg. Her research explores normative assumptions about sex, gender and sexuality in discourses on non-conformative gender expressions and embodiments. She is particularly interested in strategies taken by trans and intersex activists in organising activist work.

Ellie Nordfeldt is an intersex and trans activist based in Gothenburg. She is currently doing work at Gothenburg Transgender Support, the Gothenburg LGBTQ council and Intersex Scandinavia.

12:15–13:00

Katarina Bonnevier

comme-il-faut

This presentation moves reluctantly and possibly bravely (like a moth attracted by the light) around the painful trust of a decently queer relationship. It comes out of the, for someone with my set of preferences, intriguing era of salons and boudoirs at the turn of last century. Knowing the salons as theatrical spaces of intimacy and same sex desire, where decency is a masquerade that both shields and discloses in a realm that lies beside polite society.

BIO

Dr. Katarina Bonnevier is an architect and artist currently conducting artistic research at the Architecture and Design Center, Stockholm with the project the Club Scene. Her research around relations of architecture, aesthetics and power, especially from gender perspectives, is informed by theatricality, the carnivalesque and the activist. She is frequently publishing texts, lecturing, exhibiting and participating in public programs within the fields of art, architecture, and urban planning. She has taught at Konstfack, KTH, Copenhagen Art Academy, HDK, HES-SO etc. Her PhD is *Behind Straight Curtains: Towards a Queer Feminist Theory of Architecture* (Stockholm: Axl Books, 2007). Since 2012 she collaborates with Mariana Alves and Thérèse Kristiansson; the group MYCKET (www.mycket.org).

14:00–14:45

Mathias Danbolt

Intimate Constellations / Constellations of Intimacy: Mapping Attachments with Ester Fleckner's 'I Navigate in Collisions'

How to imagine forms of belonging beside the cultural models of attachment that dominate “the empire of love”? Inspired by sociologist Eva Illouz’s criticism of the powerful institutional arrangements that shape forms of modern love, these series of notes turn to the aesthetic in search for alternative constellations of intimacy. Thinking alongside Ester Fleckner’s series of woodcuts *I Navigate in Collisions* (2014), the presentation meditates on the conditions for intimacy in times of Grindr and Brenda, erotic capital and sexual capitalism, compulsory coupledness and utter loneliness.

Shuttling between the diaristic and the theoretical, the private and the political, the presentation meditates on the importance of rethinking the architecture of attachments in the search of sustaining other modes of living.

BIO

Mathias Danbolt is a Norwegian art historian and theorist working on politics of history and historiography in contemporary art and performance, with a special focus on queer, feminist, and antiracist perspectives on art and culture. Danbolt is Assistant Professor in Art History at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark.

14.45–15:30

Al Masson

Greek love, a tourist visit

Just having been back from a one month in residency at the Danish Institute in Greece, I want to play and share some personal materials I collected there. Greek antiquity has been “my revelation” like probably many others in my homosexuality. As an adolescent my fantasy was Odysseus. Hector was my love.

Being in the land of “Greek love” was so interesting not only confronted with the actual caricature crisis of the capitalist failure, but also interacting with gay and non-gay people. This happened under the intimidating grandeur of the Acropolis, a few steps from the Agora.

Everything in the religious aspect of Greek antiquities is related to nature, from Zeus and thunder and sun to Apollo; sexuality, desire and its diversities had also their right place among deities.

Observing Greek social structure with pressure from the family nuclear tradition and the power of the Orthodox Church has also been challenging-how the Greeks play with “the other space of desire”. This in comparison to Scandinavia with the more “advanced” gay rights that is being mainstreamed as “normal” and how in Greece this is not yet the case!

In a way there was something exciting and nostalgic about how Greeks in general (not the far right for sure!) seems to handle the “diversity of sexual spaces”. Perhaps having kept this ancient feeling for “nature” influenced by Antiquities?

BIO

Al Masson, born in Marseille, France has lived in Denmark since 1995 after many years in New York. He has studied at the School of the Beaux Arts Brussels and Art Student League, New York. Most recently Masson has exhibited at the Brandts, Odense "Play Time" solo exhibition 2013-2014 and as part of "Die Liebe zu den Dingen" at the Kunsthalle Münster 2013-2014. He was invited to be part of the Critical Art Ensemble's project "Winning Heart and Mind" at Documenta13 in Kassel, Germany, 2013 and "Mermaid/Hamlet", CAGE 83, Hester New-York, USA in 2012. www.almasson.com

15:30–16:15

Transmilitanta Brigaden

Trans Sensual Mass Hypnosis

At the symposium, Transmilitanta Brigaden will perform a mass hypnosis on all present. An untested but effective method to open up the sexual politics chakra of the artistic academic class.

BIO

Lecture tour with powerpoint

Hormone Buffet at Järntorget

Training Camps

War against the Museum of World Cultures provoked by their gender fascist toilets; result: unconditional surrender by the museum.

Underground operations against the State

Other secret operations

With investigative curiosity, Transmilitanta Brigaden explores the artistic conditions for working with a thematics based on notions of a gender-apocalyptic narrative; to overthrow society in smoke, fire and anarchy.

SYMPOSIUM CONVENED BY

Mary Coble

Is an artist who through live work and multimedia installations addresses problems of bodily, social and symbolic navigation particularly focusing on queer issues. Coble is a Senior Lecturer in Fine Art and Photography at Valand Academy.

Sara Jordenö

Is an artist and filmmaker whose work is informed by discussions around authorship, agency and the subcultural, and resides in the crossing points of institutional critique, site-specific practice, meta-observational documentary cinema, and community-based participatory art. Jordenö is a researcher and lecturer in the MFA Fine Art Programme at Valand Academy.

Carlos Motta

Is a multi-disciplinary artist and educator based in New York City whose work draws upon political history in an attempt to create counter narratives that recognize suppressed histories, communities, and identities. His first survey exhibition, Carlos Motta: *For Democracy There Must Be Love*, on view at Röda Sten Konsthall in Gothenburg through March 22, 2015.

Poster and brochure design by Linnea Thorén. Image by Ester Fleckner - Untitled (2012)

Many thanks to all the presenters, Jason E. Bowman, Petter Baggeryd, Kjell Cahmina, Mia Christersdotter, Pauline Nande, Aukje Lepotre Ravn, Emelie Storm, Linnea Thorén, Mick Wilson, and Louise Wolthers.

Funded by Valand Academy, Gothenburg University, Röda Sten Konsthall and The Hasselblad Foundation