

The Role of Public Art in the Nordic Cultural Model (online, 29 Jan 24)

Online (Södertörn University), Jan 29, 2024

Joel Odebrant, Stockholm

The Role of Public Art in the Nordic Cultural Model: A Research Symposium on Renegotiations of Swedish Public Art Policies from the 1930s to the Present.

A link for online participation will be published on the website: <https://www.sh.se/kalender/kalenderposter/2023-12-06-the-role-of-public-art-in-the-swedish-cultural-model>

This symposium explores historical and contemporary dimensions of public art as a strategy for implementing culture in welfare policy. In Sweden, as in the other Nordic countries, cultural policies for the arts have been characterized by the principle of equality, which guarantees access to art for all. This ideal also underlies the state agency for public art in Sweden, the Public Art Agency Sweden, which was established in 1937. While public art can be seen as a clear example of the welfare state's biopolitical intention to nurture citizens and enable their participation in the further development of democratic culture, the socio-political impact of state-commissioned public art remains largely unclear. The scholars and public art professionals invited to this symposium will critically reassess the concept of public art from a Swedish perspective, where the state and municipalities have a long history of commissioning artworks for government institutions such as universities, prisons, and military facilities as well as for open public spaces.

The symposium will also provide new insights into the changing role of public art since the turn of the millennium. With the advent of 'relational aesthetics' and the return of the dematerialized art object in the 1990s, artists turned to temporary structures and participatory artworks, which posed a radical challenge to traditional public art. However, it can also be argued that temporary art is much more suited to the neo-liberal post-industrial society's demand for flexibility than permanent structures. This raises questions about the definition of the term 'public' in a society that values deregulation and how public art can respond to the shortcomings of the Swedish welfare system.

The symposium will present the results of the ongoing research project "Public Art in Restricted Space: Rethinking Art and Democracy in Sweden and Norway 1940 to 2023" financed by the Swedish Research Council (2023-2026) and a recent research collaboration 2018-2020 between the Department of Art History, School of Culture and Education, Södertörn University and the Public Art Agency Sweden. This collaboration has resulted in the publication of a research report and an anthology entitled *Renegotiations: The Role of Public Art in the New Millennium*, edited by Håkan Nilsson (Huddinge: Södertörn University Press, 2023).

The symposium will be open to the public. Language: English. 29/1 2024. 1. pm – 4. Pm (GMT+1).

13.00 – 13.10

Introduction: Håkan Nilsson and Oscar Svanelid

13.10 – 13.40

Annika Enqvist, Program manager/Coordinator of research at Public Art Agency Sweden.
Public Art Agency Sweden Today

13.50 – 14.20

Håkan Nilsson, Professor in Art History, Södertörn University
Mapping the Field of Nordic Public Art with a Focus on Temporary Art Forms

14.30 – 15.00

Oscar Svanelid, Postdoc researcher in Art History, Södertörn University
The Governmentalisation of Art: A Critical Analysis of Public Art at State Institutions in Sweden

15.10 – 16.00

Moderator Mel Jordan, Professor of Art & the Public Sphere, Centre for Postdigital Culture, Coventry University will lead a discussion with the contributors and take questions from the audience.

Please register for the symposium: <https://axacoair.se/go?sy4KI5cK>

Reference:

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