

## AMONG

It is light that allows that we have sight. It is sight that allows that we see. That we see grants us a look.  
In that look is language. In that language there is l i g h t.

We begin by the light.

The light – the light.

First it is absent. The space is oblong. The floor is soft. There are objects spread in the dark.  
We are just eyes in the space. A look that can travel. A wide screen slants backward towards the far wall.  
The screen carries pictures. It lights the space. We see a video:

A 3D-modelled crust. It lies deformed across the screen. The crust is uneven and rugged. From it grows an  
animated plant. The growth is light green and billows in the wind like grass. But its roots, anchored in the  
crust, one to one, are like hair. It is a hirsute landscape. It is an overgrown scalp.  
Where does nature end and the body begin?

Around the growth is another landscape, comprising of sound. An ambient rushing, like a stream, on loop. A  
foghorn that rises and falls. A tone that grows in frequency.

Sounds follow the movement of the growth. Sounds make the growth turn and revolve on the screen.  
The sound is not surrounding the growth but inherent to it.

The sound is omnipresent. Just like the screen's and space's darks that overstep each others limits.  
Sound, video, space. There is no divide.

The screen slants so as to form a hollow beneath it. A kind of shelter.  
We stoop down, step inside. There is another screen here, this screen carries text:

Lyset lyver  
for lyset treffer  
jord, stein, gress, tre

[Light lies  
as light meets  
earth, stone, grass, tree

som helhet  
vi kaller det landskap  
lyset lyver til vi tror

as a whole  
we call it landscape  
light lies until we believe

men mellom hvert enkelt gresstrå  
er det avstand

but between every single blade of grass  
there is distance

og lyset fortsetter å lyve  
om at gress er en helhet  
til vi tror på plen

and light continues to lie  
that grass is a whole  
until we believe in lawns]

We place our fingers into the distance between grassblades. We draw out a language and landscape a lawn.

The video with text carries the name *BAK* [BEHIND]. All of the elements in the space carry the name of prepositions. *I* [IN], *PÅ* [ON], *VED* [BY], *BAK* [BEHIND]. In this way, all stand in relation to each other. In this way, all stand at a distance from each other. Via language. Inger Christensen wrote that prepositions hold consciousness in the same motion as the world. That they remind us that it is not people that create an order, but that the order already exists. We can just point to it, finger it – because we have language.

We look at a crooked willow branch. It carries a rhyme of SIM cards. They are staggered like vertebrae in the spine. The tree, the SIM cards. The veins, the years.

Spread in hordes on the floor: roots covered in reflective fabric. Their coiling in and out of each other. The video's light and the fabric's repulsion.

That reflex [also with the Latin root *reflectere*] means *involuntary bodily reaction*.

Fernando Pessoa wrote:

I saw that there is no nature,  
That nature does not exist,  
There are mountains, valleys, plains,  
There are trees, flowers, grass,  
rivers and stones,  
But there is no whole that connects them,  
(...)  
Nature is fragments without a whole

How are we to relate to the different elements in the space?

Inger Christensen speaks of our being a part of the world, but at once the part of the world that can contemplate the world and so contemplate ourselves.

We are the world that contemplates itself. We are the light that lies that grass is a whole.

This is the discussion we are entering into.  
Language as existential premise for being part of nature.

Linge Haaland's exhibition begins in her own poetry. The text-video *BAK* [BEHIND] becomes, in this sense, the point that all elements refer back to. The text is like the space's negative.

One could not say there is a procedural chronology, where first the text was produced and then the exhibition. That the text marks the outset of the space. But there is, in Linge Haaland's practice, always a turning back to an extensive investigation of language as construction and as premise for all that is made.

In the exhibition *KØ [QUEUE]* at *Kunstnerforbundet* (2018), Linge Haaland took her point of departure in Klara Semb's observations and documentation of Norwegian folk dance in the 20th century. She examined Semb's understanding of dance as a ceremonial event – and how dance as a collective experience of movement gave rise to a discussion of communality and identity.

The exhibition was built around the video installation *KØ [QUEUE]*, one of Linge Haaland's *Desperationsanimasjoner* [desperation animations], which derive from a *desperasjonsteknik* [desperation technique] – where the digital editing of the material (cutting, zooming, camera movements) take their departure point in a desperate or acute collective state, one that is significant in our time.

An oversized kernel of popcorn unfurling and closing, repeatedly, in slow motion. To a clip of a group of men dressed in white, enacting some kind of ritual of aggression. Their facial expressions and bodies unfurl like the corn. The explosive movement becomes a state that exists outside of the popcorn or the men, something universal that they can adopt – or contain. So each clip juxtaposes, imitates, repeats or reinterprets a movement another clip produces. All movements are connected associatively by their physical likeness.

A drone that again and again spews flames at a scrap of fabric caught in the wires of a telephone mast. A camera that again and again attempts to reach a rapidly trembling branch.

The camera as a tool that people employ to observe the world.  
Our shifting eyes, which in themselves are a video.

The state of desperation reveals itself physically in the installation, as mats with sculptures and printed stills from the video are placed before the screen, as though their forms have been spewed out. Or given birth to. That this state is inherent in all the space's elements means that the space, aside from feeling alarming, realises a state of being absolute. All elements relate to all elements simultaneously. They feel like fragments of an overarching whole. Or like a whole that features in all instances of wholeness.

The poet Alice Oswald in her piece *DART*, for which she spent a number of years recording workers' conversations along a river in her hometown, wrote: [I have linked their voices] into a sound-map of the river, a songline from the source to the sea... All voices should be read as the river's mutterings.

The river consists in the matter that voice is.

In one of the river's tributaries, Linge Haaland's text-work is found again:

Til Alice Oswald

Fra vanns perspektiv:

skynd deg

del deg inn i yr, så du kan spre deg

være det som reflekterer

når den tidligste morgen

strammer rep rundt alt sin hals og hviner:

*er dette lys*

*er det dette som er lys nok*

[To Alice Oswald

From water's perspective:

hurry

part yourself into drizzle, so you can spread

be that which reflects

when the earliest morning

tightens rope around the neck of everything

and shrieks:

*is this light*

*is it this that is light enough]*

Linge Haaland investigates Anthropocene philosophy, which contends that humans and all that humans produce, among it language, is indisputably part of nature.

We have named our own geological period: *the Anthropocene*.

'Anthropos' means human. Nature lives in a human age.

We have developed a language whereby we can position ourselves outside of that we consist in.

At the Nobel Prize ceremony in 1957, Albert Camus addressed his speech to artists of the day. He spoke of language and reality, and submitted that the fundamental reason for creating art must be to attempt "*total communication between all human beings*". It is around this demand that Linge Haaland built her extensive project *Hjernen er for nær munnen* [The brain is too close to the mouth].

Through sculptural experiment, video installation and performance, the project examines not how this demand can be *met*, but which linguistic constructions it implies. What does the ‘total’ consist in? And what is at play in our understanding of ‘communication’?

How to approach creating, if the aim of art is not simply dialectic – that is, to be able to contain all claims and interpretations at once – but that art should also be able to redress all divisions between *people*?

The assemblage *Hjernen er for nær munden* [The brain is too close to the mouth], exhibited at the art-space Podium (Oslo is Burning #9, 2016), works with constructions of reality. What we define as being real – and what imitates or represents reality. Through remaking-practices, Linge Haaland constructed a 3D modelled stone solely from memory. The stone is displayed in two versions, one imperceptibly smaller than the other, both archetypes of *stone*.

There is an overarching investigation of the physicality of the digital. In two videos, hand choreography is considered. In the first, two stills of hands in a fixed grip turn, rotate and imitate one another on the screen, as though their grip were a kind of dialogue. In the second video, a child’s hand moves across a 3D modelled vase, pinching, moving and lifting it.

The videos investigate hand choreography as an expression of the technologically conceived sign language we have developed.

The collective movements we partake in when we swipe across a screen.

The grip we have when we hold a telephone. Lift it.

We turn back to the light green plant growing out of the crust. We don’t know where human begins and nature ends. We pass our hands through hair and our fingers smell of grass.

On the screen, we feel the distance between the growth’s blades. The light spread between them.

This exhibition attempts to find an all-embracing language, whereby nature can discuss the human in accordance with the language humans have imposed on nature.

It is our language that allows light to lie.

*Translated from the Danish essay Blandt by Nanna Lund.*

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