

An artist's statement

My art projects focus primarily on socially constructed space, the constructing subject and the relationship between the two. By altering the physical or mental qualities of a space my art projects call for another kind of subjective being, acting or thinking in that space.

My artistic practice has developed from the grounds of critical psychology, action theory and social constructionism, all stating that a mutual conditional relationship exists between man and society, between man and system, in the way that man creates society, society creates man. Here the act or the action is the transforming point making the relationship between structural premises and social practice interesting and relevant to explore.

French sociologist Bruno Latour's Actor Network Theory also informs my work. According to this theory reality is a network of stronger or weaker interwoven connections making existing boundaries and categories consequences of social constructions rather than nature given phenomena of the world.

In those lines of thought lies a potential alternative to the present social order, introducing other possible versions of reality.

This wish to disturb social order, to shake it, to give vent and life to other forms of order was reflected in the exhibition 'reconstructing de-mo-cra-cy' in London (2005). The Muhammad crisis and the discussion of freedom of speech were still on people's minds. Using Danish newspapers I covered the interior of the gallery from floor to ceiling creating a condensed beautiful and claustrophobic media covered room. I also invited the visitor to tell what their dream democracy was. One of the answers was: "My dream democracy... is when I don't have to dream anymore".

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My projects challenge social practice and social structure. I am interested in the social effect of subtle displacements of space and time. By shaping and reshaping social form, extending or twisting social exchange, cognitive structures are challenged as well. During my exhibition 'Make a difference' (2004) I transformed the gallery into a platform for social exchange. I asked the visitor to participate in the construction of the art work, consisting of foam board figures cut from the bodies and postures of the visitors. The result was a registration of bodies in space over time.

'Looking at shopping' also disturbed social order when I and two other artists for a fortnight installed ourselves in a hip fashion shop extending the exchange of objects and ideas. I took Polaroid photos of the customers and hung the photos in the dressing room. In there, a woman could be heard reading the fairy tale Snow white... Little mirror on the wall, who's the most beautiful of them all?

I find the borders of established defined space particularly interesting to work with as they are open ended or as Latour would say less tightly connected offering more action possibilities, a greater space for action. Boundaries offer different action premises, invite alternative constructions of space. Boundaries can be negotiated.

As an example I'll mention my project 'G-rummet' (2005) (that is, the G-room, playing with my surname Grum) in which a number of questions was shown in a window of an apartment block bordering on to a public park in Copenhagen. The window was used as a projection surface for wonder, stemming from a position on the edge of public space.

Questions were raised both regarding the physical division of our life spheres – the apartment block versus the park – and regarding superior power structures – like centre/periphery, inside/outside, owner/user etc.:

Who owns the view? Where is the limit? Who is outside? Whose space is it? Is there space in between? How is space being divided? How is space being experienced?

This project was run prior to a general election. Some of the questions could be understood as statements and questions to the current socio-political state. The main issue being the strict immigrant laws being put forward by the government.

This circling about the boundaries of space could also be seen in my video installation Inside Out (2008). A video projection was shown in a former shop window. The by passer saw an interior with a kitchen sink and a kitchen window. A woman entered the room. She started doing the dishes and when the job was done she left the room. At street level the intimate space was pulled out on the façade and was thus visible in the cityscape. A poetic insight into and opening of the massive closed façade otherwise characterized by absence and bypassing cars.

My art work often exists in a limited time and space, coming into existence by the contact of the subject, being site-, space- or situation specific. Sometimes calling for active engagement, sometimes calling for quiet reflection. Always calling for a personal stance.

My work implies a subtle suggestion to re-construct inter-subjective space. To re-act. To inter-act.

Charlotte Grum, Copenhagen 2008