

Press Release

April 28<sup>th</sup> 2014



## *Concept after Concept: Before Normal*

May 9<sup>th</sup> - September 28<sup>th</sup>, 2014

Opening: May 8<sup>th</sup>, 5-7pm

Museum of Contemporary Art

Roskilde, Denmark

[www.samtidskunst.dk](http://www.samtidskunst.dk)

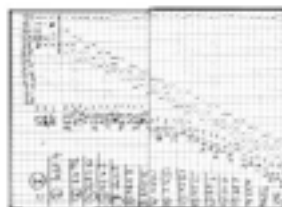
Opening hours: Tuesday-Sunday, 12-5pm

Art & Language (UK), John Baldessari (US), Björnligan (S) General Idea (CAN), Andrea Büttner (D), Anna Bella Geiger (BRA), Henriette Heise (DK), Henry VIII's Wives (UK/N/DK), Inspection Medical Hermeneutics (RUS), Kristine Kemp (DK), Koncern° (DK), Louise Lawler (US), Emil Lykkegaard (DK), Albert Mertz (DK), Présence Panchounette (F), Kirsten Pieroth (D), Michael Portnoy (US), Lasse Schmidt Hansen (DK)

Curated by Lars Bang Larsen

Art in the form of trenchcoat paintings, Kermit cakes, an erudite French garden gnome, a Viking ship, cosmic mathematics with IKEA-bookshelves, holes in the ground, psychedelic Christmas plates, famous male artists' names as bird calls...

What do we mean when we talk about conceptual art? Are its history and potential adequately understood?



Conceptualism is generally taken to be a remote and intellectual art form that avoids images and visibility, valorising text, language and information instead: the super-ego of visual arts that insists on the last word and the right to judge all other art. The logocentric cliché that 'the idea in itself' forms the conceptual

work continues to be reiterated. Contrary to prejudices against conceptualism as a rigid and analytical art form, *Concept After Concept* presents conceptual works that embrace - as they always have - laughter and active nihilism.

In the exhibition, conceptual art isn't understood as the moment when art began to produce meaning, but also as resistance to meaning: the movement towards dissolution and the desire for clashes of information that take it well beyond the power moves of the art world. Resisting both aestheticism and theory with ironic (self) critique and geeky sensuality, conceptualism was and is also cultural critique and an acid bath for rationality.

Perhaps conceptualism always needed an enemy. In the conceptual art of the 1960s, it was the art object, the myth of the artistic genius, or the idea of spontaneous creativity. More ambiguously, this enemy could even be conceptualism itself, as when John Baldessari sang Sol LeWitt's manifesto 'Sentences on Conceptual Art' (*Baldessari Sings LeWitt*, 1972).



It wasn't only a question of abolishing tradition: scepticism became self-scepticism, and was directed against any activity claiming the name of art in a radical critique of the art concept and its location within a modern cultural economy.

As a contradictory phenomenon that includes play and confrontation, irony and analysis, conceptualism's inner tensions can extend or be exacerbated to embrace an aesthetic death drive

that has the potential to detonate the individual artist. In this context, the phenomenon of artist groups, in which the individual signature is subsumed by collective identity, testifies to a structural method to undermine the conventional singular, identitarian forms of Artist, Medium and Art Work.

Perhaps paradoxically, conceptual art also displays populist traits. The work is often a joke on itself, on symbolic authority, and on processes of authorization. There is, or was, also a tendency for artists to orient themselves in the direction of popular culture and cultural specificity, imbuing global conceptualism with national signifiers or even anti-cosmopolitan embodiments of the parochial.

By focusing on under-theorized aspects of conceptual art, and sampling works from a range of generations and geopolitical contexts, *Concept After Concept* seeks to present evidence that conceptualism - then and now - has a greater aesthetic potential than usually assumed. The exhibition takes part of



its title from Kristine Kemp's work *Before Normal* (2013), indicating the continued role of conceptualism in breaking with normality in the face of the instrumentalisation of art.

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