



Rakett. The project constantly in motion

Rakett is a mobile project. It is run by Karolin Tampere and Åse Løvgren since 2003. Both of them have been educated at the Bergen National Academy of the Arts (Norway). At the moment Karolin Tampere is attending the Curatorial Training Program at De Appel in Amsterdam. Åse Løvgren is attending the Master Course in Creative Curatorial Practice in Bergen and also works as an artist with focus on camera based work.

What was the beginning of Rakett?

Åse Løvgren: We started off when we went to the academy of fine arts in Bergen, where we used a small garage-like space called Kunst_rom. We made one-night happenings and always invited artists to stay and work in the space. The finished work never really was our main focus, we were interested in the meetings this setting created. We learnt a lot from seeing how other artists worked and developed their projects, we arranged artist talks and tried to open up the process by interacting with the artists and their processes. Sometimes we invited two artists that didn't know each other to make a collaborative work especially for the space. I think this idea is an interesting notion of the curator's role: to curate artists to do collaborative work. You're not going around picking up already finished work but you start a process and set things in motion. You really don't have so much control over what will be the result of it. In working with artist-run spaces you don't really have much money to do things, but instead you have a lot of freedom. I think it would be harder for a big institution to take this kind of chances or to be so open in regards to the final work. We have also done projects in museums and big institutions and this kind of work has different opportunities in regards to space, economy and audience.

How do you combine your work in Rakett as a curator and an artist, how does it influence you?

AL: I don't draw a clear distinction in my work as a curator or an artist. In some situations of course, you have to be clear what is your role in the specific project and what is the invited artists' role. In working with Rakett we have done a number of projects where we juggled between these roles, sometimes we curated exhibitions where we picked art-works to be included in the exhibition. I would say that in most of our projects we are more in the role of artists collaborating with other artists. We are working with social settings where we often intervene in a specific site or audience. I also work quite on a formal level with both photography and video. It was

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never inspiring for me to be alone in my studio only producing artworks. I have always had this diversity in my work where you can research the same ideas and thoughts but with completely different strategies and expression.

Who are the artists you work with? What's your way of working?

Karolin Tampere: We mainly work with artists that we've seen works of in shows/presentations or met on some occasion, either during our studies in Bergen, or through our travels and projects. Often we get inspiration from our nearby environment, but we are not focused on choosing artists due to a certain nationality, this is not interesting as a criteria. We are more interested in the meeting as a format and then looking for artists and artworks that could encourage exchange and dialogue in a collaborative process. There are also a lot of coincidences in our work, I think this is important, the coincidences are your friends.

We have not incorporated the structure of an open call because we have been influenced and occupied with so many interesting artists and ideas during our activity, that it would be of no interest nor use for this time consuming bureaucracy that we think an open call structure represents.

We are interested in continuity in our work and also in keeping our projects dynamic and on a short time basis. So the participation of artists in our projects is based on invitations from Rakett. Of course artists/curators can contact us if they have a good idea and think that we might be interested in exchanging ideas or collaborating, but mostly it is Rakett that initiates the projects and collaborations we are work with.

And on the other hand we are often invited to propose ideas for events or shows, which we then use as a starting point and inspiration for ideas about who it would be interesting to collaboratively develop a project with.

But to define an absolute criteria of how and who are the artists we choose and collaborate with, is quite difficult to say. I think ideas connected to these choices are in a flow, it's in a constant movement towards somewhere you often really don't know where. Together you get some ideas. And it's also about intuition and I would like to use the word „taste“ which is not so popular or useful as a criteria from the position one has when is in power to select. I think it's very naive to say that you never judge anything, choose anything without an influence of what we call 'taste'. Everything you see, encounter and experience takes roots in your own memory that will always be a part of the choices you make, in art or wherever.

AL: We always try to do something completely new for each project. I would say we work very site-specific in the sense that we develop a new project especially for the place or situation where we want to do something. Mostly we get invited to do projects and we have worked mostly on the artist-run scene and project-spaces, but also in museums, open spaces and so on. We have developed some methods rather intuitively. I think this is the great part about working in a team, where we put out ideas and develop them

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together, going back and forth so in the end the origin of the idea is not important, it is always a process.

What are you interested in, what are you looking for in your activities?

AL: Doing curatorial work you will have to have the ability to see quality in different media and genres, I think. So I find it hard to point out some kind of art that I am interested in. I am a sucker for beautiful images when it comes to photography and films/video especially. I also like projects that are time-based and have a process that take into account the context where they are presented and are more conceptual.

What I like about your projects is that most of them are about communication between people and you involve viewers in the events. You are also interested in local issues when you work in specific places.

KT: It's true that we are interested in communication and we involve the viewers, mostly they become participants and then form a public. You often need a lot of help and engagement to make possible some of the projects we have done, and through this process the potential viewers are already participants and vice versa.

Our activities are mobile and it's also kind of impulsive in terms that it's event based. We do many events in short period of time and these are situated in different places, cities and countries. We go somewhere and see what we possibly could do, propose or show, mostly with a small budget and an idea of trying to do something with the resources present at each site. When we arrive to a certain place we rely on our intuition and on some ideas based on knowledge that we might have from that place. I also think that if you see art that you think is interesting then it's interesting everywhere in a way. Of course some works of art can be provocative somewhere because of certain cultural differences and traditions, and we are aware of those things. But we also would like to involve this to create some kind of fuss sometimes, without being obviously provocative, but maybe to tickle people sometimes. Some of the information we get about the places where we work is second hand information because different people are involved and assist us in our projects. In January 2006 we collaborated with Maria Rusinovskaja who is a young curator at Murmansk Art Museum. We visited her and all the young artists and musicians she knew in the city of Murmansk. We did a research for one week before we returned some months later and made a video program and a live music event based on these meetings and ideas of what we thought might have the quality of being inspiring.



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Jorunn Myklebust Syversen, Lilli Hartmann, Domestic Cocoon Situation, Murmansk Art Museum, January 2006

Did you invite artists only from Norway for this project?

KT: For 'Domestic Cocoon Situation' and the 'Gettogether' event in Murmansk we invited artists from Sweden, Norway, Germany, Russia and Austria. But this project was also a Satellite for the 'Barents Spektakel', a cultural winter festival in the city of Kirkenes which is situated in the very north of Norway, initiated by Pikene på Broen. There we participated with two more projects. One of them was an idea we got during our first visit to Murmansk which was about moving Murmansk Rock Club and its members to Kirkenes for two days, which we did, 15 musicians from Murmansk installed themselves and re-created their club and got to meet and interact with a new expanded audience.

In the other project we initiated a collaboration called '48h Everyday Improvement' where the Russian artists Evgeniy Shnaider and Dmitriy Novitskiy worked together with Amos Tylor from Finland and Marius Martiniussen from Norway. The four artists were invited to collaborate in a space open for the public in 48 hours. Åse and me were a part of this on 24hr basis as the project included living together for one week in Kirkenes. It's a totally different planet, it's dark and cold there, maybe three hours of daylight during the day because of the geographical location, you can imagine the intensity. The artists were provided with a space, which was open for the audience to follow the process of their collaboration. The common ground of the artists was a formal one, all were trained as painters. In the process of the 48h they made up a set of rules that they had to follow. It was around 25 different rules which included things like copying each other's work, wearing certain uniforms while working in the space and at one point indicating that the 'common language was art'. They desperately tried to create restrictions for themselves because our given task was so open. Then we had an open discussion together with the 48hrs artists and other artists and critics participating at the 'Translation' show. We were asking questions about their thoughts, about the process and aims of what we were doing. Of course it was a frustrating situation because they couldn't understand each other perfectly due to the lack of a common verbal language. Almost at the end of the time we gave them a second task. That was to finish up and create one common art piece. They decided to tape everything they had produced in the space. It became a big brown glossy sculpture, they taped everything, pencils, their suitcases etc. It looked really beautiful.



48h Everyday Improvement

You give the artists ideas and they could follow them.

KT: They are free to make use of some ideas as a starting point. We often take part in the process and develop the ideas together. It is mostly about starting processes, and about not keeping things under control, as I earlier mentioned.

Could you tell me more about the exhibition 'Stilleben'? You asked artists to contribute with a story about a bouquet of flowers and the description of the composition of flowers. You presented different bouquets.

KT: The 'Stilleben' project was based on an invitation from the curators of 'Projekt 0047' in Berlin. (It has actually just moved back to Oslo.) They invited three curators to their project 'HOOKUP I-III'. The mission I guess was to make the space more known and connect more people to it. During these weeks there were about 80 people who were exhibiting there. When we got this invitation we wanted to see how we could involve as many artists as possible in that small space. We wanted to find a structure to be able to challenge artists whose work we liked.



Stilleben
Utstilling i Projekt0047
Berlin, November 2005



Stilleben
Utstilling i Projekt0047
Berlin 2005

Stilleben at Projekt 0047, Berlin, November 2005

What is specific for your projects?

AL: As I said we try to do different things all the time, but I would say that in working with Rakett we focus on collaboration with other artists. We usually spend time together making a project and we create a situation. We focus on art and culture as a meeting point. We did a project at neugerriemschneider during Rirkrit Tiravanilja's 'Magazine No.4' where we invited a professional acupuncturist, so the visitors were offered an acupuncture treatment. They had to lie down for approximately twenty minutes and relax. In this project our idea was to slow down time and offer a different way of being or behaving in a gallery space. In our projects we always invite people to stay for a while, sometimes incorporate concerts or different aspects events to the exhibition setting.

Could you talk more about the show in Magazine Station?

KT: As Åse mentioned we invited a professional acupuncturist to collaborate on 'Euphoria Station'. This idea was developed through our investigations in the potentiality of the structure in the space of 'Magazine Station No.4', that Rirkrit already had created. He wanted to built a platform of two levels with a connecting bridge and to have a kitchen available. The kitchen was actually supposed to be open and to be used by the public, but the gallery did not want to allow this, so the gas oven and the other stuff became just an alienated useless sculpture in the corner of the area of the office space of neugerriemschneider. I thought it was a pity because it destroyed the idea Tiravanija had for his show. During 'Magazine Station No.4' different people, artists groups, fashion designers, cultural producers, musicians etc. were invited to do something everyday. Due to our residency at Kunstwerke we often attended these events because it was almost next door. We observed how the space was used, and there was almost anything you could think of going on. We wanted to do something completely different, and also something with an aspect of and in terms of relaxation because of all this action everywhere all the time. We were also very curious about how such an idea would be received, because it seemed to be a little bit hippie and new age-ish involving this kind

of new alternative medicine. We also accompanied the treatments with sound by playing Brian Eno. We set up the event by thinking of using people in combination with the given structure, the installation as a sculpture with the people who will be treated by the acupuncture needles. It was called 'Euphoria Station' because of the one-needle treatment that they could choose from. The treatment was based on two points you could choose from, one between the eyebrows and one on top of the head. In Chinese medicine these points are also called „valium points“ because they give a relaxing feeling and calm the mind.



Euphoria Station, Magazine Station No.4 by Rirkrit Tiravanija, neugerriemschneider gallery, Berlin, 15 October 2005

What was the response from the public?

KT: The response was surprisingly positive. You rely on people involved in the situation that you create. It takes a lot from people to be involved in this kind of project. And people just came and lay down. They were lying there for half an hour. There were always people there and everyone was totally amazed. They were using the art space as a place of relaxation. It seemed like people were gaining energy. We also wanted to give an homage to Rirkrit through making a Russian Borsj- soup and at the same time give the local Thai women who were cooking for the show everyday, a day off.



Euphoria Station, Magazine Station No.4 by Rirkrit Tiravanija, neugerriemschneider gallery, Berlin, 15 October 2005

It looks like you don't have any strategy, your activities are not commercial, but full of refreshing and inspiring co-operations.

KT: I think that generosity is a very important thing in the field of culture. It is also something that people hopefully start to trust more and more instead of just criticizing it. I think generosity is something real.

You are not only interested in visual art, you also cooperate with musicians, you organized cinema. Could you tell me more about this kind of activities?

KT: Yes, the cinema was a two day project called 'Kjør-Inn-Kino' which involved a short program of artists' videos as a starter for the evening and then there were feature movies from Finland, Thailand and France. It was situated at 'Sørfinset Skole'. 'The NordLand', a project in north of Norway was initiated by Geir Tore Holm, Søsja Jørgensen, Kamin Lertchaiprasert and Rirkrit Tiravanija. This is in a small village in Nordland with approx 70 inhabitants in the middle of the mountains. It takes one and a half or two hours to go to the closest bigger city, Bodø. It's amazing, it's a very very beautiful place. It's so beautiful that you don't really know what to do there except to walk around. Sometimes you get paralysed by beauty and you feel that everything you do is useless because you have already everything around you. It feels stupid to start trying to make objects or art from a traditional point of view, in that kind of place. It's more interesting to do something together with people living there, coming there and who might be interested in certain activity and exchange.



Kjarinn kino
Setting up the screen, parking lot in front
The North Land
Serfinset, February 2005



Kjarinn kino
Lavvo(sami tent), radio transmitting
the sound from the movie, serving of soup
pallets, reindeer-fur, lavvo
Serfinset February 2005, The North Land

Kjør-Inn-Kino, Gildeskål, Nordland, Norway, February 2005

Did you involve people from this community in your project?

KT: You can't just come to a community of 70 people and think you can do your own stuff, and it's not interesting either. In our project we are interested in collaboration with people who do different things who have a different knowledge but would like to share, to participate. The project 'The NordLand' is about exchange, which is rooted both locally and globally. How to keep seals from eating fish and get parasites, which berries can you make medicines of or how would global warming influence this nature rich area and what can you do too prevent this? You have everything there, you can be self-sufficient just by living there, you can hunt, fish, everything is possible in that way. People knew what we were doing from the first day of the cinema project, it is a small place. We were building outside on the side of the school and then they came one after another and asked if they could help. We made it together. Last year they really wanted us to do something but unfortunately we were in Murmansk. In February 2007 we are planning to do an

outside jacuzzi. The difficulty could be that it might be too hot and the steam would make a curtain between the viewer and the movie, which gives us one of the funniest challenges we've had so far I guess. hehe

What is your artistic part in the projects?

KT: If you are trained as an artist you might observe your surroundings a little bit differently maybe? You are in a way trained to work with ideas on many levels. I think that as an artist you might gain something, some knowledge which can be useful as a catalyst for ideas in many fields both in society and culture. That's what you are asking: what is your part in it? Is it just about ideas or organization? I think that it's the process and how it/we/I can work as catalysts. If you have to define it, which I don't like, the process could be seen as the artistic part of it. Everybody could do this kind of cinema, invite people, put together a program and so on, but it's about doing it I think, and devoting time, this is important. I think it's an important aspect in one way or another that I might not be able to answer. I'm also questioning this for myself but in a more positive manner. I don't get depressed of not having a defined object or defined thing to point out: 'this is the art', I find that quite uninteresting. I like what cannot be defined. It's much easier when you are creating objects or working in a commercial gallery. It fits into a system, which already has a structure of values. You can sell it, you can buy it and you can analyze it as an art critic or art historian. You have already a lot of references and a long history of values and you have got a map including a set of rules already decided for you. You can't deny it. You have to accept that this is a piece of art. Is it good or not, it's not a question. You accept it 'this is art'. I think, these things we are busy with also have a long history. It's also about asking questions without having answers. But maybe look for them through the process.

I think in your activities there is a lot about freedom of choosing but also awareness of structures you are working in. You work in different places and environments sometimes it's a gallery or a small village or a museum. You are trying different things and it's more like experimenting.

KT: It's maybe a good summary of our activities. Trying things all the time and not denying so much. Instead of framing or defining ourselves it might be interesting to do something with the opportunities one gets makes and gives. If you think about and get busy with what people and everybody thinks of who you are and what you are doing in terms of what is right or wrong, what is politically correct or incorrect, you are paralysed. I do not think of that as an especially productive, pleasant or developing situation to be in.

What kind of experiences, discoveries do you find important after 3 years working on Rakett ?

AL: I find that working in a team is a very grateful way of working. You can complete each and you get to projects that would be difficult to do alone. During those three years we have collaborated with a lot of interesting, inspiring people. That gives you new ideas

and ways of looking at things. On more practical level I think that we have become better at the financing part. Starting off one works on a very idealistic level is an aspect that I think will always be there when you work with the artist-run scene, but we have become better at localizing some funding-possibilities what makes more things possible.

After 3 years of your activities a lot of things happened. What has changed in your work?

AL: I think it is hard to say that we have gone a specific way or developed in a certain manner. Next year we have some projects that will be a completely new way of working for us. But I think we have found some strategies that work for us in the way we collaborate and the way we produce our projects.

KT: Sometimes it feels like it's more and more open. In the beginning we had a space in Bergen for 6 months. We didn't run the space but we used it. This gave us a certain format, size and local audience. In 2004 we did a two days event called 'Darling don't leave me all by myself' in Tallinn. One part of it was in an art space and the other one next day in a club, both were curated. This was our first big thing. It involved 15 people, almost everybody travelled together with us. I think it was one of the first crossroads that led us to where we are now, and what we are doing. We like doing events, because we don't think it's so interesting that shows are open for one month and nobody goes there in the end. It's better to create a moment when people meet and then at the spot discuss the artwork, this creates possibilities. We are not interested in just showing the works. We think that the way this project can live on is introducing people to each other. This is a big part of our projects, not only the events we are doing but what people are taking with them from the events. It is about being open and not in control. You can't take credit for such things. We observe that we like it and it inspires us to keep on doing more projects. For example, it was a challenge to make the cinema in Nordland possible. We used radio transmitters to send sound to the radios everywhere so you could listen where you wanted and look at the movies. People really liked it and I think this inspired 'Ballongmagasinet' to start up the 'radio Kongo' project during the previous summer. You see sometimes that you introduce something that people like and take over and continue on their own. I think that's also part of an artistic project. This is an uncontrollable catalyst. If you go somewhere and you try to be something and push something, I don't think you will always manage. But if you go somewhere and simply do things, that can inspire, and things might happen.

What are your plans for the future?

AL: We have some projects for the next year that will be completely new in the way we will work with them. As a plan for the future we will continue to work from project to project and from place to place. I also think that we want to do some publications during the next year. We have previously collaborated in a project called 'The NordLand', where we did a drive-in cinema in 2005. We will make a new one in February, but it will now have a sauna-like setting for the drive-in. Here we will present a mixture of artists'

videos and feature films. See www.rakett.biz for more info about our previous projects.

You don't have any space at the moment and you don't want to have one.

KT: No, we don't want this kind of space either. If you have a space you are trapped, you are kidnapped by your own project, or it becomes more about the space than the project due to economic reasons, funding is the hard part when running a space. It's enough bureaucracy already to get funding for projects. I don't want a gallery space to suck out all the energy from me into its walls. It is more interesting to support travels and new work on different sites, and offer experience that you gain by this activity instead of offering a space with four walls. This is important for me at least, and our activity is also about being free.

Thank you very much for the conversation.

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Photos courtesy of Rakett.

