

PUNCH Performance Art
Network CH

MAPPING EUROPE

PLACES/ORTE

STOCKHOLM, SCHWEDEN

DATE/DATUM

7.4.19

INTERVIEW FROM/VON

JASMIN GLAAB

WITH/MIT

ERIK WIJKSTRÖM

OCCASION OF THE TRIP/ANLASS DER REISE

**SUPERMARKET – INDEPENDENT ART FAIR
STOCKHOLM**

**Interview from Jasmin Glaab with Erik Wijkström
on the 7th of April 2019
at the Supermarket Independent Art Fair Stockholm**

Jasmin Glaab: We will have a talk about performance in Sweden. For PANCH – Performance Art Network CH we are doing the project «Mapping Europe» and we are interviewing European players of performance art. Thank you to have time to talk with me. Please introduce yourself quickly.

Erik Wijkström: My name is Eric Wijkström and I work with PALS – Performance Art Links, which is a performance art festival project in Sweden. We have realized projects for the last years in both large and small formats. We are also associated with Fylkingen – New Music and Intermedia Art, which is an artist run association for experimental music, dance and performance. They have been around since 1933. So PALS right now operates as a group that uses Fylkingen for space. So we are all members of Fylkingen. But the PALS organization is separate from Fylkingen.

JG: So Fylkingen is the biggest network for performance artists in Sweden?

EW: Fylkingen doesn't have a focus on performance art but they do show performance art. Fylkingen is members run or artist run. But it's made up not only of visual artists but – as I said before – of experimental musicians, dancers, performance artists. They have quite a large space in Stockholm in a building called Münchenbryggeriet. So they have probably a hundred square meters like a black box basically where you can do concerts or performances.

JG: Would you say this is a institution you feel represented by?

EW: I am a member, so yes.

JG: Are there other networks for performance art in Sweden?

EW: Well, I would say they're a bit informal or sort of product based. There is for instance Lilith in Malmö. They operate a little bit as a performance art gallery. They realize fairly large projects that need lots of production. Maybe not with just a performer or an individual artist showing a work, but sort of a group comes together and makes a performance under the direction of this artist and they build scenography. They are working in quite a different way than we do and they also have quite a lot more funding.

JG: Are they also building up an archive?

EW: I guess, but I can't answer that. I would be surprised if they didn't have an archive of the stuff that they have shown.

JG: What is the difference to PALS? You mentioned, that you are working quite differently...

EW: PALS is a smaller product. Although we are five people working on it, we all have other jobs on the side. So we have to do this in our spare time. Some of us had the opportunity to work with it more, because they've had personal grants. But in general it's only done in the free time. When we apply for funding we apply to a few different institutions that support cultural activities. We apply with a budget for each single project. There is no budget at all to just run PALS. So we basically apply for all of the money to have a festival. Then we get maybe half of it and then we have a festival anyway. That's sort of the standard mode of operating. It has happened that we've been forced to realize the festival without money. That has also happened.

JG: Just to remain around the question of networks, do you know any European performance art network, that you work with or you know?

EW: We know Boris Nieslony with Black Market International. He also is building a personal archive. We know PAS Performance Art Studies. There are networks in Finland also but I can't remember the names right now. We know about this performance biennial in Berlin but we haven't worked directly with them. I could add that many of our networks or not official networks are based on personal connections with other artists that also organize festivals in different countries.

JG: You regularly have contact especially with people organizing performance festivals in different countries.

EW: The main idea with PALS is to sort of help establishing networks, but we haven't formalized it, maybe. And it's in the name: Performance Art Links. If we make a festival and invite people from abroad and also friends from Sweden, then we always consider if they are organizers themselves. If we invite those people it will bring more artists in connection with each other. When they meet at our festival it's possible for them to maybe start collaborating on their own.

JG: Tell a little bit more about the format of PALS festival.

EW: We have been operating on an every other year principle. We would have tried to have a large festival with maybe 20 participants plus a workshop for art students who will also participate in the festival with works. So we might end up with presenting 30 performances over the weekend. This number always changes. Then in the years in between, we would try to have collaboration projects that are smaller and they usually become realized through us inviting a group from somewhere, quite often Europe. They will present something at Fylkingen and then we have gone to their space and presented maybe one or two of the PALS

members and some invited guests from Sweden. With some of these products that we call small, we have ended up with sort of 5 separate little events in different countries. The small products take just as much work as the sort of big festival.

JG: Let's talk a bit about support. What are the conditions for performance artists in your country?

EW: There are different ways of securing funding. I would mention Fylkingen again, because since we are members we can use Fylkingen as a resource. We can book time at Fylkingen. That is really a big advantage for us, because we can get the space. You have to book the space quite a long time in advance. But then you can book it for a few days and realize an event. There's a sound system and logistics that make it possible to show art. When we apply for funding then usually we do it through the organization of Fylkingen. But we do all the application work for our products, fill in all the forms. Then the money gets paid out to Fylkingen and we distribute it as fees and for materials and other costs that we have. We mainly apply for funding from the Kulturradet in Sweden. There is also a Nordic art council where you can apply for exchange products between Nordic countries. I've applied personally as an artist to realize a product to Konstnärsnämnden – the Swedish Arts Grants committee, an institution that supports individual artists, where you can get travel grants as an individual for instance. You can also get working grants. We've done this in different ways. There was also one festival where we just didn't get any funding. Then we used the resource we had which was Fylkingen. We had a little bit of money left over from previous projects. It was basically enough money to buy coffee for people. No one could get a fee, we couldn't pay for travels. So we decided, okay, we can't give very much and we made an open call to give the opportunity to people who were motivated enough to present their work without any compensation. We ended up with at least 70 applications. We had to say no thanks to half of them basically. Then we realized this festival weekend with about 30 performances over three days. It actually worked really well. But that time no one got paid. In general, we tried to apply so people would have at least a symbolic fee that we can pay for their accommodation and travel. Because it's quite a lot to ask someone to come from another country, take days off work and not get any compensation. That isn't really fair to the artist.

JG: What's about writing, talking, critic? Are there art critics in Sweden that write especially about performance art?

EW: I wouldn't say that there are people who are focused only on performance art, but there are people who write about performance art. At one festival we had a guy who works with social sciences. He was making a blog during the festival, sort of a sociology blogger of what was happening. That was great fun.

JG: For you personally, how is your relation to art critics?

EW: We haven't focused a lot on establishing contacts with art critics. It's something we were talking about. We make press releases and try to make people come but you never know. We have maybe not been the most successful people in gaining attention from the press. I mean, we do publish material about every festival on our own website. We try to invite people. But there are not lots and lots of reviews on the stuff that we have been doing.

JG: Would you like to add something?

EW: I think I would like to add the importance of the workshop that we do in the large scale festival. We get a performance artist to be the tutor for a number of students for two or three days. They work together and sometimes they come up with collective performances but who also wants to make individual works. Then we let them show their work at the festival basically on the same terms as the professional artists or the experienced artists that we have invited. They are also in the programme. We think it's quite important that if you want to teach people to make performance art if you can, it's really, really important that they also make the experience of showing their work to an audience. I don't think you can learn as much about what happens when you're in the situation meeting the audience by rehearsing or reading about performance art or replicating famous performances from the past. I don't think that's what performance really should be about. This is why we stress giving the students also the same amount of attention as the other artists get.

JG: Thank you a lot for your time.

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PEOPLE/LEUTE

- Jasmin Glaab, Basel, Switzerland: www.jasminglaab.com
- Erik Wijkström, Stockholm, Sweden: www.erikwijkstrom.net
- Boris Nieslony, Köln, Germany: de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boris_Nieslony

FESTIVALS/PROJECTS/PLACES

- PALS – Performance Art Links, Festival, Stockholm, Sweden: www.palsfestival.se
- Fylkingen – New Music and Intermedia Art, Stockholm, Sweden: www.fylkingen.se
- Lilith Performance Studio, Malmö, Sweden: lilithperformancestudio.com
- Münchenbryggeriet, Stockholm, Sweden

OTHER KEYWORDS/ANDERE STICHWORTE

- Swedish Arts Council - Kulturradet: www.kulturradet.se
- Konstnärsnämnden – the Swedish Arts Grants committee: www.konstnarsnamnden.se