

# HOW MUCH FOR A TREE?

## HOW PLANNING GOES WILD AND THE VALUES OF TREES.

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### ABSTRACT

This exhibition item contains a book, “How much for a tree” and a 4 channel video installation. The book investigates a planning process in Malmö, that turns out as a disaster. A hundred year old park is destroyed. The investigation of the process is done in the form of a drama, where all the people involved get to tell their version. The question that is posed is: What are the values that are destroyed by this planning disaster? The video installation tries to give an answer to the question from the authors’ point of view. What are the values of trees? There are numerous ways of valuing trees, from biologic estimation on the value for insects and other plants, from the perspective of the property owner, from the importance for the air quality in the city, etc. For telling the values of trees from non-anthropocentric view, the trees importance for humans is not important. A non-anthropocentric view values what trees are in themselves, as far as it is possible for human beings to identify. The authors, both artists, suggest that through artistic means it is possible to touch upon and communicate the real non-anthropocentric values of trees.

### THE INTERVIEWS

The people that are interview for the drama are those who, in some way, have been around the park of Gottorp, and those on which desk Gottorp has turned up as a case. The interviews are made by tape and by video, but build a drama in the presentation (the book: How much for a tree? and Vad kostar ett träd?).

### THE DRAMA

In the literary structure of a drama, a planning process is told in the book. The actors of the drama are different planners at the city of Malmö, including the Malmö chief city gardener. There are also actors like three landowners the farmer, the exploiter and the businessman. Included as actors are also people that have been especially engaged in saving the park of Gottorp. Included is also the old man who as a boy lived close to the park of Gottorp, but now, by chance, is the one that uses his chain saw to cut down the trees. The different monologues point in different directions. No one feels responsible for the disaster. Not even the city of Malmö, that at the same time is planning a new park, nearby the old, destroyed park. For the authors, who interviewed the different players in this drama,

the focus is to examine the value of the trees for the various players.

#### THE FILMIC INSTALLATION

The video installation is shot by a climber, who climbs trees the same size as those destroyed in the park. A man, which you never see, climbs carefully in the centre of a big tree. You see only the limbs of the man.

The films in the four channel installation are executed with subjective cameras. He climbs slowly. The sound you hear is from the tree and the birds and traffic around. The installation is set in a room that is 5 x 5 meters.

#### THE CONTRIBUTION TO THE NORDES' THEME

The contribution to the design research theme of Nordes 2015 is the attempt to articulate, through artistic means, the non-anthropocentric value of trees. There are numerous ways of calculating the value of a tree, pointing to the values they have for humans and the ecology. But what is the value of the totality of the tree? The whole of a tree is more than what it could provide for in the world viewed by humans. The authors claim that the tree is an aesthetic totality, this is something that can be understood and communicated by artistic means.

Methodologically, the authors challenge the anthropocentric world view first through a piece of investigative journalism (the research about the reasons why Gottorp was eradicated), second through a writing that takes the form of a storyboard for a drama published in the form of a book (the narrative resulting from that research), finally through a filmic installation that performs the values perceived through research and writing (the intangible values made tangible through moving image and sound in an installation embracing the spectator). In operating these three modes, the authors want to impact their audience in a way that distant writing alone would not achieve. Images sometimes tell more than words. The authors propose that artistic means are the most adequate way to reflect interactions between species. Questions

might arise from being a spectator immersed in the filmic installation: Are the limbs of the man caressing the tree or conquering it? The authors are convinced that the contact between trees and humans is always balancing on this edge.

Proposing alternative ways of thinking and living is what the authors engage in as artists.

They have in earlier project been engaged in garbage and dumps and what is being thrown away.

Trees are thrown away, not because of a need for timber, but discarded because they are not wanted anymore. The authors claim that this present society does not provide the space for large trees anymore. Through the project "How much for a tree?" they access the meaning and value of the trees, values discarded regardless of the results of a democratic planning process. The exhibit returns to the initial value of trees, the value of experiencing and being in physical contact with the trees.

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