

KNUT ÅSDAM

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Recent exhibitions and press

Knut Åsdam's most recent shows include solo exhibitions at; **Klemens Gasser & Tanja Grunert**, NYC, **Galleri Tommy Lund**, Copenhagen, **School of Architecture**, Oslo, **Museum of Contemporary Art**, Oslo; **Kunsthau Glarus**, Glarus, Switzerland, **Galeria Sonia Rosso**, Pordenone, Italy, and **Tate Britain**, London. It also includes major installations or works shown at; **Museo Rufino Tamayo**, Mexico City, **Schirn Kunsthalle**, Frankfurt, **Palazzo delle Papesse**, Siena, Italy, **Pontevedra Biennial**, Spain, **AG Metallhaus**, Berlin, **Gagosian Gallery**, NYC, **Henry Urbach Gallery**, NYC, **The Parrish Museum**, NY, and the **Valencia Biennial**.

Åsdam represented Norway in the **1999 Venice Biennial** and the **1999 Melbourne International Biennial** for which both he created large architectural installations.

Upcoming shows include two large projects for the **2003 Istanbul Biennial** –an architectural installation and a film-project; a **touring installation** and film going to several venues in England; **The Mead Gallery**, Warwick and **The Mercer Union** in Toronto. A new film-project is also being produced by **Fine Arts Unternehmen AG**, and will be released in February 2003.

Feature articles on Åsdam's work have been widely published internationally, covering much of his last 10 years of exhibition activity. This includes the cover article of **Artforum**, Feb 2000 and the MIT press' "**Grey Room**" whose most recent issue is opened by a substantial article on Åsdam's works. His last solo exhibition in NY, at Klemens Gasser & Tanja Grunert was reviewed in **Artforum**, **FlashArt**, **Time Out**, and the **Village Voice**. This fall, **October** magazine will feature an article on Åsdam's most recent public art-work, -a permanent outdoors sculpture/installation for the Academy of Architecture in Oslo.

In the Spring of 2003, **Fine Arts Unternehmen AG** will publish a 120 page hardback book on Knut Åsdam's work, curated by Simon Sheikh.

Short on recent works:

Åsdam's exhibition at the **Museo Tamayo** and at **Schirn Kunsthalle**, is an architectural installation *Filter City (Filter City Tamayo Edit (spanish version))* with a 8 min narrative audio component and which overlooks the city. At **Palazzo delle Papesse**, Åsdam made an installation in the medieval open air tower of the museum, replete with 80 slides of modernist apartment blocks. For his exhibition at **Gasser & Grunert**, NYC, Åsdam showed three suspended multimedia installations created from film-set curtain systems, with videos (*Notes Towards a Dissipation of Desire* and *Cluster Praxis*) and slides (*Psychasthenia 10 series 2*) deal with group dynamics and social architecture. His solo show at **Kunsthauus Glarus** was dominated by a major architectural installation: *The Care of the Self, 2001 edit*, a night time park created from trees, bushes, flowers, grass, soil and light filtering film. At the **Museum of Contemporary Art** in Oslo, Åsdam exhibited *Psychasthenia 10*, a series of 22 nocturnal images of apartment buildings, and the two multimedia installations *Cluster Praxis* and *Notes Towards a Dissipation of Desire*.

Further description of recent works

Filter City, 2002. Architectural installation. 24ft x 20 ft x 10 ft (h). Suspension rods, aluminium tracks, commando cloth, light filtering foil, window (17ft x 10ft (h)), carpet, stereo system, 2 benches, audio narrative (7,5 min Spanish version, 8,5 min English version).
Currently at the **Museo Tamayo**, Mexico City.

From the confines of the white windowless exhibition space, visitors enter a hanging black felt enclosure containing two rooms. The small entrance room leads to a larger room which has a large opening to the city outside. One side of the darkened ovoid chamber is a 17ft (w) x 10ft (h) glass window, treated with a light filtering foil, letting through only 5% light. A sound narrative accompanies the visitors viewing of the city. Looking across are brutalist modern apartment office buildings, to the right is the medieval cathedral, looking down is a roman ruin and to the left the city's financial district sky scrapers. Two black vinyl benches provide a place to sit and contemplate the space, the city and the content of the audio narrative. The audio consists of a mixed monologue and dialogue between two women describing a city in the process of transformation and the break up and formation of a politicized group or collective of people.

Psychasthenia 10 series 2, 2000-2001. Installation with 80 slides. Dimensions variable. Suspension rods, aluminum track system, commando cloth, slides projector, 80 slides. Within this installation, "nocturnal images of urban housing developments are projected

within an ovoid viewing chamber constructed of black felt hung from suspended metal tracks. Within the intimacy of the enclosed space, which is like that of a changing room or a confessional, the onlooker is presented with a decidedly externalized point of view, melancholy images of concrete exteriors and impenetrable lit interiors.” (from review by Jordan Kantor in Artforum Jan, 02)

The Care of the Self, 2001 edit, 2001, architectural installation. Dimensions variable. Soil, trees, plants, grass, wood hut, grow lights, light filtering foil, glass enclosure. Exhibited at **Kunsthauus Glarus**, Switzerland.

After first walking over the first 1/4 of the exhibition space, the visitor enter into a garden at night. Made up of trees, bushes, grass and small plants rooted in soil of varying levels and formations —and with a system of paths —the space creates sensations of seclusion and openness. Moving through the installation the visitor becomes included into the sexualized economy of relating to other bodies in public space. However, it is also a place to withdraw from the surroundings into a fantasmagorical space, an immersive simulation of a park, -a space for comtemplation, simple enjoyment and encounters.

Cluster Praxis, 2000, video projection installation, dimensions variable.

Video 8’40”, colour, stereo sound. Suspension rods, aluminum track system, commando cloth, DVD player, video projector and stereo audio system.

Externally, the room hangs like a large object hung from the ceiling. It is made from black sound dampening curtains hung from a heavy duty track system. Inside the “curtain space” the floor is carpeted in dark gray, creating a warm sense of enclosure. The video, “*Cluster Praxis*” is structured by the sound—narrative mix of voice and ambient soundscapes—dominated by a 5 minute long poetic monologue, which deals with assimilation and desire dissipating into the city. “Moving quickly from an excavation site through selected Psychasthenia facades to a [...] dance party, *Cluster Praxis* traces an ever-deepening subjectivity. The “objective” camera angle of the exterior shots gives way to the “subjective” first-person vantage, as the camera melts inconspicuously into a sea of undulating dancers.”* *Cluster Praxis* deals with dancing as a form of social practice, and with the desire for collectivity and bodily social liberation. The assimilatory aspect of dancing in a club or party makes the dancer part of the baroque mass erotification of social space. *(from review by Jordan Kantor in Artforum Jan, 02)

Notes Towards a Dissipation of Desire, 2001, Video-projection installation, dimensions variable. Video 3’20”, colour, stereo sound. Suspension rods, aluminum track system,

commando cloth, projector, audio system.

Within a suspended room, the video uses photographs, drawings and moving images to deal with a search for political meaning or political desire. It shows scenes from political protests where the protesters are matched in number by the police and where both groups enter a symbiosis in relation to both the city and political architecture. While the protest scenes represent a desire to have a voice—even within a form that is stale—the drawings represent a condition of apathy and a breakdown of language and the body. Architectural shots frame the video within the economy of the city, architecture of surveillance and ghosts of social programs.

Psychasthenia: The Care of the Self, at the 1999 Venice Biennial:

For the **1999 Venice Biennial** Åsdam created the architectural installation *Psychasthenia: The Care of the Self*, 1999, as well as designing the exhibition environment as a whole in a response to the Pavilion's own architecture and the ideologies implicit.

- *Psychasthenia: The Care of the Self*, 1999. Architectural installation (40ft (l) x 25ft (w) x 10.2ft (h)). Glass, light filter, steel, 30 tons of soil, trees, bushes, flowers, grass.

An architectural enclosure made of filtered glass walls contains a 'night time' park/garden made entirely from live plants and soil. The filtered glass creates an artificial nighttime within the space in the daylight hours where viewers only see themselves and their surroundings reflected in the dark surfaces of the glass box. Inside the installation, viewers can see through the glass and observe the outside without being seen. Leading into the piece is a 7m long octagonal corridor that fades from beige to black. This is both a sci-fi quotation and a practical light-lock. The interior architecture is made by trees, bushes, smaller plants, grass and soil in different levels and formations, creating a system of paths and areas with different degree of seclusion or openness. Moving through the space, the viewer becomes part of a sexualized cruising economy in relating to other bodies in the space. As with Åsdam's other architectural installations, *Psychasthenia: The Care of the Self* deals with spaces that are part of the unconscious of the city while also facilitating a social space for the viewers to become part of the installation's narrative themselves.

1999 Melbourne Biennial

In the 1999 Melbourne Biennial, Åsdam made a three-part installation in three exhibition rooms interconnected by architectural transitions.

- In the first space, Åsdam made an architectural installation, *Psychasthenium Audio*, 1999.

The installation mixed science fiction and sex-club architecture ‘as two strands of modernism’s unconscious’ with two audio-narratives dealing with assimilation into the subjectivity of the city. Leading into the space, one walked through a corridor with a spray fade going from light beige to grey and black. Further into the space there were three spaces linked by dark glass panes, which allowed persons to peek from one room to another. These spaces were also faced out into the street through a large filter-darkened shop-front. The two outer spaces had audio narratives played on large comfortable headphones. In the one space the short monologue *FireNarrative*, and in the other the longer narrative *Legendary Psychasthenia* which uses a radio-play format. Both audio pieces use monologues, dialogues and narrative textured audio and deal with an idea of the unconscious of the city and assimilation of desire into the city fabric. The middle space was active in relation to the sound-narratives by putting the person in that space into a narrative relation ‘tinted by fantasy’ to the persons in the other rooms or those walking the corridors.

- Through an architectural transition with a spray fade, one would enter from outside the first piece, into a large blacked-out room which housed the double video-projection *Psychasthenia (2+2)*, 1997-98, (double video projection, no sound, btw. 7m. and 8m. wide) Åsdam continues his investigation of space, identity and notions of ambient power. The title references Roger Caillois' use of the term 'psychasthenia': a disruption between personality and space in which space becomes both seducer and devourer. *Psychasthenia (2+2)* is a highly stroboscopic video-projection of fetishistic, high-modernist architecture. Utilising tropes inherent in youth culture and ambient/techno/jungle music, the borders between self and environment are examined through beats and delays in the image. What results is the sensation of dissolving into the environment. One finds oneself, at times, "in" the image, and in perspective distanced from it and at other times totally absorbed by it. The viewer finds his/her-self somewhere between building, environment, narrative and subject, capitalism and schizophrenia. Through another architectural transition with spray fade, one entered into a space that Åsdam had given over to the artist organisation UKS, of which he is a member. UKS had a presentation of videos, magazines, and events/exhibitions that they have housed, as well as a live performance with Jørn Mortensen and Bo Krister Wallstrøm.

Psychasthenia (5), 1998 at Pakkhus, Momentum Nordic Biennial 1998

“The Pakkhus cinema that houses video installations and video screenings is a perceptual machine. Designed by Knut Åsdam, it is a trippy locus for brainy escapism, replete with a

coke machine.”

The installation comprised 12 videos in a mix of sci-fi and sex club architecture. The entrance/exit of the structure was a dimly lit 17m (55ft) long octagonal corridor— the length creates the space as socially ambiguous—underlining the fantasy and desire inscribed in this minimalist architecture. At the end of the corridor one enters an obscurely lit in-between space; where there is the option to explore an area with several small rooms interconnected by dark windows. Two of these have a video-monitor each running two video programs. The room in-between functions as a withdrawal space: a chance to watch other people watching videos, other people— or yourself. Finally, there is the main screening area: a 10ft back-projection and four large, deep seated seating arrangements in black vinyl.

Heterotopia, 1996 at PS1 NYC.

Architectural installation with video, *Untitled: Pissing*, 1995. Platform (where other artists work can be shown ontop). Ground glass (milky translucent) on two sides, gallery wall on the third, and open to enter and exit the underneath of the platform on the forth side. 13 inch monitor on mounting arm showing *Untitled: Pissing* on a loop. Large black vinyl cushions on floor. The installation is a space of withdrawal from the rest of the exhibition space. *Untitled: Pissing*, which shows a crotch shot of a man peeing in his pants, functions both as a catalyst and as a backdrop and connects the installation to spaces “outside” through the investments of sexuality into every nook of society. The installation aims to conflate the adult and child subjeectivities into a contemporary experience.

Åsdam utilises sound, video, photography and architecture to work with the politics of space and the boundaries of subjectivity. Often these concerns are related to themes of dissidence, remnants of utopic practices, and an analysis of space in terms of desire, usage and history.