

## TALES IN THE LIGHTHOUSE 2009

The project was planned by an initiative-taking group: Sabine Popp, Aksel Striim, Katrine Faber and Malene Pedersen. Their starting point was a desire to establish an artistic collaboration thus creating a total experience for the audience.

It can be seen as a kind of laboratory for cross-disciplinary experiments and, also, experiments putting art in different public spaces with the intention of engaging the everyday users of these spaces in a dialogue. In using public spaces art can be brought closer to people, and an opportunity arises for everyday life and magic to meet.



The project was carried out in and around Anholt lighthouse and lighthouse residence from August 20 to September 1 2009. In this period the working group included the following:

Katrine Faber (storyteller, actress, singer)  
Aksel Striim (musician, composer)  
Tabea Dürr (textile artist)  
Sabine Popp (visual artist)  
Malene Pedersen (sculptor)  
Eva Aren (textile artist and hostess at the lighthouse residence)  
Morten Priesholm (assistant and blogger)  
Simon Jeppesen (photographer)  
Inbal Zaban and Manuel Wroblewski (cooks and assistants)  
Amelie Ochs (art student and assistant)

Anholt, a small island of 22 square kilometers, is situated in the middle of Kattegat, the strait separating Denmark and Sweden. The island is inhabited by approx. 160 people, and during the summer months 20.000 tourists visit the island. The landscape is made up of beaches, heaths and scattered patches of conifer. The largest part of the island is 'the desert' – a nature reserve of lowland heath where people are only allowed to travel on foot. The desert is one of the few places in Denmark that truly can be said to be deserted. High above you is the sky, far away – the horizon, the silence surrounding you only interrupted by the wind and the ocean.

The lighthouse and the lighthouse residence are situated at the Eastern extreme of the island, approx. 10 kilometers from the nearest house. To get there, you have to walk along the beach or cross the desert. Until some time in the 1950s the lighthouse residence was occupied by the lighthouse keepers and their families. Almost unaltered, it has since then served as a holiday residence for more than 40 years.

The idea for theme of the project – birds – was suggested to us by an interview we did with Agnete Alsing who as a child lived in the lighthouse residence. She told us about the birds' significance in the secluded lives of lighthouse keepers' families: as an esthetic experience, as food and material for clothing, and even as toys: The birds that during the night had crashed into the lighthouse lamp and died were used as dolls by the children. Agnete Alsing also participated in the project as a local storyteller.



During the work process we exchanged research material, plans and ideas and worked in our respective artistic genres towards a unified whole. The whole process took place in the lighthouse where installations, performances, stories and music came to life as a result of the collaborative efforts of the artists. Several of the artistic works were centered around the thematic of life and death – while keeping “birds” as the central and underlying theme. Some of the elements using old myths as starting points had a more dramatic expression, while others were more playful as they used local stories and visible traces after birds as grounds for fabulations.



This lighthouse is normally closed to the public, but during the weekend of August 29 to 30 it opened its doors to those who had ventured upon the long walk there and gave them the opportunity to experience exhibitions, music and performances.

Nearly all the rooms and windowsills had been made use of to exhibit the works of Sabine Popp, Tabea Dürr and Malene Pedersen. Sabine Popp filled the casemates with silhouettes of seagulls in flight thus using the birds’ collective movements to underline the thematic of the stories.

Tabea Dürr playfully visualized birds’ names and the literal meaning of these in small textile sculptures and installations in the windowsills. Malene Pedersen exhibited sculptural works using paper clay while incorporating found objects thus thematizing the decaying of birds’ bodies. Sabine Popp and Malene Pedersen exhibited a collaborative work – the installation “Freedom is a Scary Thing”, a further development of an earlier video/sculpture collaboration. For this version, Aksel Striim played music that he had composed

for the installation. In addition to this, Sabine Popp, Tabea Dürr and Malene Pedersen also worked together creating costumes and effects for the performances and the storytelling event.



On both days of the weekend the audience was invited to join a walk up through the lighthouse and listen to a story based on the cruel Greek myth of Procne who married the king of Thracia, in which the characters are finally transformed into birds. The story was visualized by means of three tableaux on the different levels of the lighthouse with performances, experimental song and music by Katrine Faber and Aksel Striim.

The highlight of the weekend was Saturday night. The audience was invited to dine at the lighthouse residence where a menu of bird dishes was served. The meal was prepared by local cooking woman Mia Nordby, while Katrine Faber and Aksel Striim performed live music and song in the living rooms of the residence. After the meal, the audience was taken to the lighthouse for an evening of stories, conversation, music and songs.

The following local storytellers participated in the storytelling event:

Etyl Stenberg (Anholt Museum)

Agnete Alsing (who lived at the lighthouse residence as a child)

Bent Nielsen (keeper of Anholt lighthouse)

A number of storytelling events and performances involving songs and music were given by Katrine Faber with Aksel Striim on cello, hand drum and flute. Myths of the Inuit and migrant birds were the themes of these performances.

The conversations that arose following the local storytellers' contributions are an important part of the project. We wanted to open up a space in which everyone was given the opportunity not only to ask questions but also to contribute with their own insights, anecdotes and stories, which would otherwise have remained silent knowledge. (As an added encouragement for visitors to contribute, a corner room of the lighthouse had also been set up with a guest book and an invitation for visitors to write a piece.)



**Some quotes from the lighthouse guestbook:**

"A wonderful experience that I will be enjoying for a whole year until I return to Anholt and the lighthouse" – summer house guest

"Fantastic. Thanks. Keep up the good work." – summer house guest

"Beautiful music and art, not to mention the stories. Hope to see this in all the coming years." 9 year old girl living on Anholt

"I once dreamt about doing this, precisely this ... Not all dreams come true. Some simply require patience. For many years I dreamt about crossing the desert on Anholt on foot and see the lighthouse and the seals. Tomorrow I will have lost one dream – and won a memory." – tourist

"Survivalist trip with beautiful art and delicious food." – backpacker



**The project has received support from:**

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