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Terrestrials in Ruined Landscapes

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Jordboere i ruinlandskaber — muligheder i en antropocæn æra

af Nathalia Brichet, Frida Hastrup
og Mai Mangaard

Introduktion: Sundholm på verdenskortet

En ting er ikke bare én ting. Det er dette på en gang simple og komplekse udsagn, som Camilla Nørgårds samling i vores øjne adresserer. Ved at insistere på, at storbyens sønderknuste glas, manglede industribrokker, udjente sko og knust porcelæn er andet end blot ophobet affald, udfordrer Sundholmssamlingen beskueren til at forholde sig til, hvad velkendte ting også er. Og til at overveje de spor, som menneskelige aktiviteter sætter. Dette spørgsmål om, hvad noget i øvrigt velkendt også er, skal vi efter vores opfattelse øve os i at stille — her på tærsklen til en tidsalder, hvad der diskuteres som en ny geologisk tidsalder æra. En tidsalder hvor vi som menneskehed med videnskabens terminologi officielt bevæger os fra en holocæn æra til en antropocæn æra, hvor menneskers aftryk på jorden er blevet så stort, så tiden 'fortjener' et nyt navn opkaldt af os (antropos). Ifølge en position i videnskabelige diskussioner har vi i vores relativt korte tid på jorden så gennemgribende og med stadigt stigende intensitet forandret jordens økosystemer via ressourcendvinding, industrialisering, befolkningstilvækst osv., så livsbetingelserne på kloden er uigenkaldeligt ændret. Hvis menneskets indvirkning på det globale miljø er blevet så stor en kraft, så det kan sammenlignes med andre geologiske kræfter som tsunamier, jordskælv, vulkanudbrud, istider m.m. — forårsaget af vores blotte forvaltning af vores menneskelige liv, ryster det vores etablerede kategorier om menneskelige spor i landskaber, om brugen af ressourcer, om industriens efterladenskaber,

Terrestrials in Ruined Landscapes — Potentials in an Anthropocene Era

by Nathalia Brichet, Frida Hastrup
& Mai Mangaard

Introduction — Sundholm on the World Map

A thing is never just one thing. This statement, at once simple and complex, seems to be what Camilla Nørgård's collection addresses. By insisting that glass shards, industrial leftovers, worn out shoes and broken china are more than just accumulated pieces of city trash, the Sundholm collection challenges the viewer to think about what well known objects also are. And it urges us to consider the traces of human activity. In our view, the question of what well known objects also are is all the more important now — on the verge of an era referred to by some people as a new geological epoch. An epoch in which, as per scientific terminology, planet earth has moved from the Holocene to the Anthropocene, indicating that the human imprint on the globe has become so significant that a geological era 'deserves' to be named after us (anthropos). According to many voices in the scientific landscape, in the course of humans' relatively brief time on earth we have radically and with increased intensity changed the planet's ecosystems through resource extraction, industrialization etc., resulting in irreversibly altered living conditions.

If humans' impact on the earth's ecosystems — caused merely by our (mis-) management of human life — is momentous enough to be compared to other ecological and geological forces such as ice ages, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, tsunamis etc., as is implied in the notion of the Anthropocene, our

og om alle de andre(s) historier, der altid er til stede i ethvert sted og øjeblik, og om integrationen af hele kloden som en del, deler et fælles problem.

Om man kalder denne tilstand antropocæn eller ej, så sætter vi mennesker spor, hvor end vi lever livet — og disse aftryk efterlader os også med ruinlandskaber overalt på kloden. Sundholmssamlingen er et sådan ruinlandskab, løftet ud af et område, der fra 1908 til 1976 blev brugt som tvangsarbejdsanstalt for hjemløse, psykisk syge, alkoholikere, prostituerede og kriminelle. For at holde de indsatte inde, var Sundholm omkranset af en voldgrav, som delvist blev bygget af affald fra det omgivende byliv. Ligesom Brunkulstjerne ved Herning, hvor undergrunden er blevet ustabil pga. tidligere udvinding af brunkul, Tjernoby i Ukraine, hvor en zone på 30 km i radius er erklæret for høj-radioaktiv zone, eller Agblosshies såkaldte "E-Waste" losseplads nær den ghanesiske hovedstad forbrugt og forældet elektronik og IT udstyr, eller Stillehavets enorme flydende plastic-øer og den Mexicanske Golfs oliedønninger alle er mere eller mindre dramatiske eksempler på, at industrialiseringer, ressourcebehov og øvrig menneskelig aktivitet skaber nye geografier og nye strømme, der binder klodens egne og beboere sammen i en ny slags globalisering. Sundholm, hvor ubetydeligt dette sted end forekommer, er således forbundet med andre steder og historier og er en del af en igangværende og irreversibel transformation af landskaber og økologier.

Og det er her midt i disse (delvist) misantropiske antropocæne landskaber, at vi har brug for håb og optimisme — for form, farver, kreativitet og ikke mindst opfindsomhed. Det er her og nu, vi vedvarende må stille spørgsmålet om, hvad noget kendt og angiveligt selvfølgelig også er? Er ting, som dukker op af Sundholmens undergrund, måske andet end industrielt affald?

established categories are shaken. How do we think about human footprints in landscapes, the use of resources, industrial remnants, and about the always present and layered other stories that any moment and place entail? How do we categorize all these features if, indeed, the globe has become integrated to an unprecedented degree as a whole that shares a common problem? Whether we refer to the present era as Anthropocene or not, humans leave traces wherever we live — and these traces effect ruined landscapes everywhere. The Sundholm collection can be seen as such a ruined landscape, unearthed from an area in Southern Copenhagen previously used as a facility of correction and forced labour for the homeless, mentally ill, alcoholics, prostitutes and criminals during the years 1908-1976. To keep these people enclosed, Sundholm was circled by a wide moat, the edges of which were partly constructed from leftover materials from the building of the growing city of Copenhagen. Similarly, the site of prior extraction of brown coal in Western Jutland that has polluted rivers and left the underground highly unstable; Chernobyl in Ukraine where a zone with a 30 kilometre radius has been declared highly radioactive; the Agblosshie dump on the outskirts of Ghana's capital Accra where electronic waste ends up and seeps into the surroundings; the enormous islands of plastic waste that float in the Pacific and the oil spills in the Mexican Gulf are all more or less dramatic examples of how industrialization, need for resources and other human activity create novel geographies and currents, which tie people of the earth and disparate places together in a new wave of globalization. Sundholm, however insignificant the place may appear,

Hvad vil det sige, at noget er brugt op? Hvad er natur og hvad er kultur i en samling der består af skærver, asfalt, porcelæn, dukkeben og glas? Er der muligheder i det kasserede for at tænke vores kategorier på ny? Disse og andre åbne spørgsmål er nødvendige både for at bevare optimismen og for at finde måder at leve sammen på, som kan forhindre yderligere ødelæggelse og overudnyttelse. Der er brug for at gentænke det, vi allerede tror, vi har og det, vi mener, vi kender. Ikke mindst for at lære at omgås og leve med og i de ruinlandskaber, der tilsyneladende kun bliver flere af. Det er her, vi med museumschefen og idéhistorikeren Ken Arnolds ord må genbesøge genstandene – for at se, hvad de muligvis også kan give anledning til.

Velkommen til Sundholm

– et ubeslaglagt mødested

Lad os se lidt nærmere på samlingen. I foråret 2015 krydsede et hold humanistiske museologistuderende fra Københavns Universitet (blandt dem Mai Mønstgaard) Amager Fælledvej sammen med deres underviser Malene Vest Hansen fra kunsthistorie og Nathalia Bricchet fra etnologi, samt en af deres kolleger (Frida Hastrup). På den anden side af vejen bød kunstneren Camilla Nørgård velkommen indenfor i en lys, luftig og nybygget lejlighed på Sundholm. Vi skulle se og tale om den Sundholmssamling, som Nørgård havde indsamlet og skabt over de sidste 2 år – netop der hvor lejligheden ligger. For ikke at tilsmudse de nye hvidpigmenterede gulve stillede vi skoene i entreen, og som en mimen af det, der ventede forude, formede vores mange udtråede sko endnu en collage af levet liv. På et øjeblik var lejligheden fuld af unge mennesker, som hoppede, kantede og listede sig rundt på strømpesokker mellem koloristiske øer af udgravede genstande. Der var et leben på de to etager i lejligheden; genstandene blev løftet, nærstuderet,

is thus connected with other places and histories and is part of an ongoing and irreversible transformation of landscapes and ecologies.

And here, in the midst of these (partly, mostly...) misanthropic landscapes we need hope and optimism – and play with creativity and inventiveness. Here and now we must continuously ask what the alleged knowns and givens also are. Are objects emerging from the Sundholm facility more than industrial rubbish? What does it mean to assert that something is exhausted? What are nature and culture in a collection made up of broken stones, asphalt, porcelain, dolls' legs and pieces of glass? Might that which has been disposed of give us an opportunity to rethink our categorizations? These and other open questions seem necessary for us in order to try to stay optimistic and find new ways of living together – and possibly prevent further destruction and overexploitation. There is a need to reconsider what we think we already know and believe. Not least, it seems to us, in order to learn to live with and in the ruined landscapes that only seem to keep proliferating. As aptly phrased by museum director and historian of ideas, Ken Arnold, we must revisit the artefacts – to explore what they might occasion and what they might also be.

Welcome to Sundholm – An

Unassigned Site of Encounters

Let us now take a closer look at the collection. In the spring of 2015, a group of students of museology (Mai Mønstgaard among them) and their teachers, art historian Malene Vest Hansen and anthropologist Nathalia Bricchet, as well as one of their colleagues (Frida Hastrup), all from the University of Copenhagen, entered the gates of Sundholm. Inside the



diskuteret, fotografere og lagt nænsomt ned igen. Arbejdspligten for beboerne på Sundholm blev fra 1970'erne erstattet af en serie af forskellige sociale tilbud for folk, man af den ene eller anden grund har opfattet som udsatte, og i dag huser Sundholm bl.a. et indhegnet center for kriminalitetstruede unge, et herberg for hjemløse, et aktivitetscenter samt et kunstnerfælleskab, som Nørgård er en del af.

Udstillingen i den toetagers store lejlighed gav anledning til et væld af interessante diskussioner, særligt fordi den udfordrede vanlige kategorier for videnskabelighed, æstetik og museumsinstitutioners normer for, hvad en udstilling er og kan. Dagens pensumtekster lagde op til diskussioner om museernes "outreach"-programmer, og om hvordan man får nye brugergrupper ind på museerne, og om hvordan museerne kommer ud ad de fysiske institutionelle rammer, samt diskussioner af, hvordan man i øvrigt kommer i dialog med befolkning og borgere.

Og uden at være tænkt som et outreach-projekt, gav alle disse overvejelser mening netop her på disse få 'private' kvadratmeter. Ikke mindst i Nørgårds fortælling om udstillingens tilblivelse. En tilblivelse som tydeligvis har krævet mange forskellige former for samarbejder for at lykkes. Nørgård fortalte, hvordan hun havde været i

compound, artist Camilla Nørgård welcomed us in a brand new and unfurnished apartment that had yet to be lived in. The occasion was an excursion to see and discuss Nørgård's Sundholm collection, temporarily set up in the apartment while the rest of the housing complex was finalized. For the past two years, Nørgård had created a collection from the building site inside the former Sundholm correction facility where the new apartments were now taking shape. To prevent us from tainting the mint, white wooden floors, we all took off our shoes in the downstairs hall, and as a kind of mimicking of the collection our many down-at-heel shoes made up a collage of lived life. In a matter of moments, the apartment was full of young people jumping, edging past and manoeuvring around on stockinged feet between the colourful islands of collected objects. Artefacts were inspected, discussed, photographed, touched and carefully put back. Questions about their organization were raised, and their origin caused speculation. From the 1970s, the forced labour admonished to the inmates of Sundholm was replaced with a series of social programmes for people who for a number of reasons were considered vulnerable. Today, the Sundholm compound houses an institution for troubled and crime prone youngsters, a shelter for homeless, an activity centre – as well as an artist community of which Nørgård is part.

The temporary exhibit in the two-story apartment caused a host of interesting discussions, in particular because it challenged established notions of scientific robustness, aesthetics, the norms of museum institutions and of what an exhibition even is. The readings in advance of the excursion invited reflections on

the excursion invited reflections on



dialog med både entreprenør, boligselskab og andre, der skrånede over byggepladsen eller havde deres daglige gang på Sundholm. Hvordan folk undrende havde spurgt til, hvad kunstneren med gummistøvler og pose på byggepladsen befattede sig med. Hun fortalte, hvordan hun holdt øje med både gravemaskinernes færden og med vind og vejr, som alle var aktører, der bidrog til at blotlægge nye "skatte" for hendes fødder. Sundholmssamlingen var aldrig et tænkt skrivebordsprojekt med en intention om at inddrage denne eller hin (socialt udsatte) gruppe. I stedet var den båret af Nørgårds egen interesse, som i tillæg affødte et væld af samtaler og uforudsigelige møder. Som fx historien om den arbejdsløse stenhugger, der havde sin dagligdag på Sundholm, hvor han arbejdede med forskellige sten – og om Nørgårds stilfærdige indsamling af hans afhængede skærver, som således indgik i Sundholmssamlingen "Vi har en Jens Vejmand, lige herude", fortalte Nørgård begejstret og bekræftede, at denne skikkelse ikke kun eksisterede i kanoniserede tekster.

Møderne mellem kurator, genstande og andre mennesker var langt fra struktureret som en hjælp til socialt udsatte grupper eller omkring forestillinger om, hvad sådanne grupper kunne interessere sig for; Sundholmssamlingen var

museums' outreach and participatory efforts, their work to attract new users groups, on the question of how museums might go beyond the boundaries of the physical museum building and on how to enter into dialogue with citizens and wider society.

Without ever being conceived as an outreach project, all these questions made sense on these few and 'private' square metres. Not least Nørgård's story about the creation of the exhibit, which made clear that a series of collaborations and meetings had been required for the display to happen. Nørgård told us that she had been in contact with entrepreneurs, people from the housing organization, workers and others who passed the Sundholm construction site on a daily basis, and she recounted how people had wondered what the artist wearing rubber boots and carrying a bag, looking down and occasionally kneeling down to pick up something was doing. She told us how she kept an eye on the excavators as well as wind and weather that were all actors contributing to the excavation of new treasures before her feet. The Sundholm collection was never imagined as an armchair project intended to include this or that socially vulnerable group and have it participate. Instead, it was born out of Nørgård's own interest in an area with a multi-layered history. Nonetheless, it so happened that the collection occasioned a host of conversations, participations and unexpected encounters. Thus, for instance, an unemployed stonemason who came to Sundholm every day to work on different kinds of stones contributed to Nørgård's collection by providing his stored cut stones. 'We have a real Jens Vejmand roaming here', Nørgård said, referring to a character in a canonical Danish folk song, while affirming his existence



ikke sat op for at ville noget bestemt med nogen. I stedet blev samlingen til som en platform for en fælles udforskning af et sted, som blev udgjort af og centrum for industrihistorie, sociale teknologier for bestemte befolkningsgrupper, arbejds gange, stenhuggeri, en kunstners nysgerrighed og æstetik blandt meget andet. Hvor beskeden samlingen af potteskår, glas, dukkesko, husgeråd og andet end forekommer, virker den for os som en kærkommen invitation til at overveje, hvordan ruinlandskaber, store som små, kan udforskes, uden at deres betydning anses for beslaglagt på forhånd.

En 'kreativ ansamling' snarere end en 'repræsentativ indsamling'

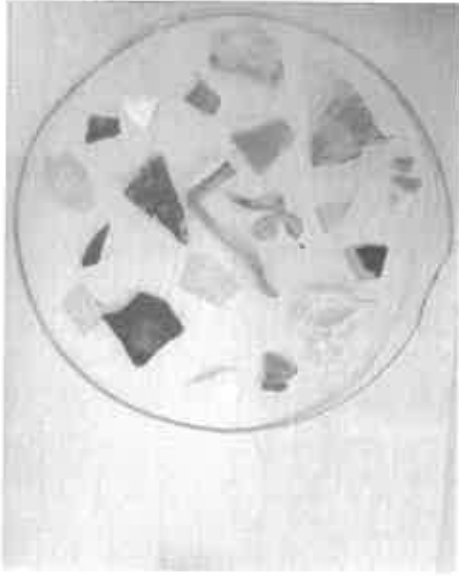
På mange måder er Sundholmssamlingen "nede på jorden". Hier er genstandene ikke udstillet bag montrere, men er placeret på gulvet. De meget forskellige genstande er præsenteret sammen i små grupper, hvor de både fortæller historier hver for sig og i samspil med hinanden. Informationsniveauet i udstillingen er begrænset. Vi får ikke forklaret de enkelte genstande, men i mødet med de mange objekter kommer vi til at stille vores egne spørgsmål og give vores egne bud på, hvad de forskellige genstande beretter om. Samlingen er inspireret af Raunkjær

also outside of official folklore.

The encounters between curator, artefacts and other people were anything but structured social support programmes directed at this or that social group, nor were they built around images of what some or other allegedly vulnerable person might care for. The Sundholm collection was not compiled and displayed to target a particular problem or user group. Instead, the collection emerged as a platform for a shared exploration of a common site, made up of industrial histories, attempts at social engineering aimed at specific groups of people, present and past work routines, stone cutting, the curiosity and aesthetics of an artist, among many other things. However modest the collection of pots, shards, glass shards, dolls' shoes, household utensils etc. appears, it seems to us to provide a welcome opportunity to consider how ruined landscapes of whatever size and scale might be explored – without already having been assigned a particular meaning or history.

A Creative Assemblage

– Exploring Muddy Grounds
In many ways, the Sundholm collection is very down to earth. The artefacts are not displayed behind glass in locked cases. Instead they are placed on the floor. The very different artefacts are combined in small groups, where they tell stories both on their own and in combination with other artefacts. The information in the exhibition is very limited; the artefacts are not labelled or explained, but through the encounter with the assemblage of different objects viewers pose their own questions and offer suggestions as to the nature of this or that artefact. The collection, Nørgård explains while we are all seated between the



small islands of displayed objects, is inspired by the so-called Raunkjær Circle Method. Nørgård tells us that Raunkjær was a botanist active in the first half of the 20th century, who in order to assess the plant diversity within a chosen area would throw a metal ring over his shoulder and then map the flora there. This procedure was repeated a number of times to achieve a representative image of the numbers and kinds of plants at the designated site. On the printed invitation to the opening of the Sundholm collection, a photo of a metal ring encircling collected artefacts, thereby discreetly referring to Raunkjær's technique. The circle method indicates a scientific epistemology that targets representativity and the quest for mapping, describing and generalizing an object of study thought to be 'out there'. For Raunkjær and his contemporaries the aspiration was to get as close as possible to reality. What is interesting about Nørgård's play with the circle method is that it highlights a common schism between art and science – primarily archaeology. Several of the archaeology and history students in our group pointed the messed up classifications. In the exhibition, lumps of asphalt were combined with supposedly much older pieces of broken china, glass splinters and antique toys. To be sure, chronology and typology were completely absent as ordering principles in the Sundholm collection. These classificatory norms dominate most cultural historical museums, Nørgård's collection and exhibition thus prompted a discussion about the relation between art and cultural history. In the case of the Sundholm collection, it was the site, the artist's interests and creativity and encounters with other people that jointly created the work. Summarizing this

I udstillingen var asfaltstumper sat ved siden af gammelt skåret porcelæn, flaskehalse og gamle dukkeben. Det var tydeligvis hverken kronologi eller typologi, som var klassificerende faktorer for Nørgård. Sådanne klassifikationer dominerer ellers kulturhistoriske museer i udpræget grad og Nørgårds udgravning og udstilling gav derfor anledning til at genoverveje forholdet mellem kunst og kulturhistorie. Her var det stedet, Sundholm, og Nørgårds æstetik og møder med andre mennesker, der gik i dialog og skabte værket. Sat på spidsen diskuterede vi, hvorvidt Sundholmssamlingen kunne udstilles på Statens Museum for Kunst og/eller Nationalmuseet eller Københavns Museum.

Det, vi finder interessant her, er, at der hverken er en fantasi om repræsentativitet eller om, at samlingen skal instrumentaliseres på en bestemt måde. Den peger i den forstand fremad og ud ad i stedet for at være evidens for noget allerede givent. Cirkelmetoden vendes så at sige mod sig selv – i stedet for at sikre repræsentativitet angiver den kreativitet og et mål at tilfældighed. Måske er det sådan, vi må bebo en antropocæn verden ved at gøre bedre brug af det forhåndenværende. Det er i dette lys, at sammenhængen i vores øjne er spændende som en udforskning af et ruinlandskab. Den fremstår hverken som en traditionel kunstudstilling eller som en kortlægning eller dokumentation af en given historie, men som en ansamling, der inspirerer til at revurdere forestillinger om det naturskabte henholdsvis menneskeskabte.

Ruinlandskaber som fælles anliggender

Sundholmssamlingen kan således ses som en kunstnerisk dialog med et antropocænt landskab. Med fødderne plantet i jorden viser Nørgård måder, hvorpå vi kan appreciere og relatere til fortidens affaldsrester, og hvordan en sådan omhu og et engagement skaber dialog og

discussion, we debated whether the collection would most appropriately belong in the National Museum or in the National Gallery of Denmark.

What intrigues us here is that the Sundholm collection is neither marked by a fantasy of representation, nor by a specific instrumentalization of the artefacts. In a sense, the collection points outwards and forward, instead of evidencing something already given. The circle method, one might say, is turned on itself – instead of targeting representativity it indicates creativity and a measure of randomness and coincidence. Maybe this is the way to inhabit an Anthropocene era – by making better and more inventive use of what is at hand? Against this backdrop, the Sundholm collection provides a highly interesting avenue to explore ruined landscapes. It appears neither as a traditional art exhibit nor as documentation of a given history, but rather as an assemblage that inspires us to reconsider ideas about what is natural and what is manmade.

Ruined Landscapes as Common Concerns – A Revisit

The Sundholm collection can thus be seen as an artistic dialogue with an Anthropocene condition. With her feet solidly on the ground, Nørgård shows ways of appreciating and relating to traces in landscapes and demonstrates that care for and engagement with these create participation and excitement – and possibly novel categorizations. The fleeting pop-up character of the collection, on temporary display in what is to become a private apartment, and its collaborative creation are important means to this end, just like the playing around with the often rigid boundaries around artistic and cultural historical

interesse – og muligvis nye kategorier. Det flygtige pop-up element i samlingen, der er midlertidigt placeret i en lejlighed, og dens kollaborative tilblivelse er vigtige, ligesom legen med de ellers ofte afgrænsede genrer for hhv. kunstneriske og kulturhistoriske udstillinger. Som jordboere må vi i fællesskab gribe de muligheder, som dukker op i de ruinlandskaber vi både producerer og lever i. Sundholmssamlingen er blot én anledning til sådanne genbesøg og udforskning af kategorier og genstande.

Om forfatterne

Nathalia Brichtet: Udover at undervise på det humanistiske tværfaglige tilvalgsfag Museologi er Nathalia Brichtet postdoc ved forskningsprojekterne Natural Goods ved Saxo-Instituttet, Københavns Universitet, og Aarhus University Research on the Anthropocene (AURA) ved Institut for Antropologi, Århus Universitet. Sammen med Frida Hastrup indsamler og udstiller Nathalia Brichtet desuden genstande fra etnografiske feltarbejder.

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exhibitions. As terrestrials we need to team up and seize the opportunities emerging from the ruined landscapes we produce and live in. The Sundholm collection is just one occasion for the much needed and ongoing exploration of categories and things

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