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Studiowork Inventory

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Essay

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STUDIOWORK INVENTORY

*Architecture and Art as quotidian practice:
Short notes on the emergence of presence*

Works by Per Olaf Fjeld and Emily Randall Fjeld

01 Surfacing

In a world infatuated with large-scale schemes, outward sensationalism and architectural promotion by branding, contrasting, seminal work(s) do germinate and develop insistently on more humble, parallel tracks.

Practiced with genuine playfulness, caring insistence on basics and firmly anchored in local conditions, these seemingly unspectacular activities often remain under the radar of professional or public recognition.

On those terms, the *surfacing* of Per Olaf Fjeld and Emily Randall Fjeld's small selection of their *oeuvre* indeed constitutes a remarkable moment. Encompassing more than 30 years of intense activities, the present exhibition condenses rare material in stringent out-lays and roomy selections.

The assembled material is extra-ordinary, on many levels. Not necessarily in size, but certainly in depth. It includes smaller architectural projects, a handful of finely executed dwellings and summerhouses, an unorthodoxly delightful furniture collection, theoretical projects and selected art pieces. All created in close, albeit oblique, relation with the main architectural works.

On first glance, one might be struck by a seemingly *anachronistic* stance inherent in the material. In conception and obviously manufacture, a certain delightful time lag is ubiquitously present. It is the firm constancy of these markers that acts as benevolent *alonge*, freshly propulsing the work(s) into new, and more timely territories of classification.

Likewise with other categorisations: while some of the works clearly inscribe themselves into precise definitions, the supporting paraphernalia, easily recognisable, somehow discretely elopes into other, ambiguous grouping(s).

There is, obviously, one pivotal condition at stake. Acting as a magnanimous, crucial amalgam ingredient, the carefully crafted *Artworks*, ooze with refined discharges, to maintain a chartered, unflinching course. Encompassing a longing for "*erotics of art instead of hermeneutics*", the overlapping works by POF and ERF establish broader territories of sensuous presence.

02. Presence

Presence can, indeed, prove to be quite overwhelming. When conventional bearings for understanding appearance are offset, certain misconceptions do ensue. One could define this state of things as utmost relevant: Alive and active conditions of ambiguity.

It is these conditions of tangential ambiguity that activate the various works with continuous vibrating tinges of formal *deja-vues*, accounting for cognitive stimulation(s) and hints of other, less knowledgeable references. In other words: the exhibited works do have a fine capacity to make one nervous, despite the innocuous ostensible.

The intent of those proceedings should not be mistaken as developed *conceptual* gatherings. Works by Per Olaf Fjeld and Emily Randall Fjeld emerge in part from slightly deviant sources and certainly require more obliquely candid readings, disregarding objective interpretations.

Their immediate powerful presence(s) might at first be underrated. The buildings, for instance, are very reasonable indeed, radiating a serene, precise Nordic balance between context and use, mediating culture and nature in well behaved conventional permutations. Yet, in all their inherent simple beauty, they behave like wild stallions just after taming: intensely aware, present and acutely suspenseful.

The supplementing *dwelling* paraphernalia, on the other side, establishes other, and more perplexing presence-assessments. While most of the implements fulfil their basic duties as *mobilier*, their formal behaviour(s) introduce various levels of benevolent *mischief*.

Not following any unwritten Scandinavian dogma of ergonomic-comforted functionality, the various furniture(s) - extrapolated for a time, for all the pieces in the exhibition are integral parts of the Fjeld's home, on loan for the exhibition- perform their dual duties as both functional entities and extravagant set-pieces.

The intense formality of most works including the art pieces, unfold from a keenly clarified sense of order. Firmly mathematical in most of their exponential growths, the permutations nevertheless are never set completely free: a strict sense of dis-order re-calibrates the formal presences into shards of frozen music, to be re-animated when needed (or fancied).

03 Sustainability

Upholding certain modes of practice while maintaining other vital art and architecture matters on balance, presupposes tuned and focused activities.

Per Olaf Fjeld and ERF's finely disposed *Studiowork(s)* unravels this condition on many, thought-provoking levels: Throughout the presented material, spanning over a longer period of time where analogue conditions slowly eroded in favour of more effective digital replacements, one clearly senses a precise core of resistance. There is, in the old fashioned understanding of the term, a genuine grounding of sustainable conditions.

A joyfully stubborn insistence on maintaining the use of few, chosen material as basic elements to be developed; A compassionate understanding for the potential(s) inherent in direct, easy affordable *matter prima*: wooden sticks, rafts, planks, paper on the light architectonic side, brick, timber and slate on the heavier side. Felt, cloth, cardboard, wire-mesh and glass for the artworks: A mildly simplified set, rigorous.

Maintained and improved over time and with diligent precision, this restrain then unfolds into a myriad of astute variations: The emergence of a clear and serene syntax, later evolving into more sophisticated language with idiomatic variations.

A living *lingua franca*, in progress: Reflective, thoughtful, compassionate and certainly aware of its etymologies, clearly tinted while maintaining a respectful distance to its core origins. Per Olaf Fjeld's distinctive, knowledgeable and intense engagements in both the late practice and work(s) of Louis Kahn and thereafter most of Sverre Fehn's central *oeuvre* remains crucial, and perspires.

Without Emily Randall Fjeld's parallel involvement in both topic(s) and the towering figure(s) - at first via a highly inspired production of *reflecting* artefacts - later in extremely focused in-depth archival work, no possible sustainment would attain these heightened levels. Language presupposes constant, informed dialogue. An perpetually ongoing conversation.

Sustainability thus does not necessarily comprise broader, conservative conditions. It can also encompass stepping-stone-grounding measures towards more elaborate, concerned precisions on smaller, vital scales.

04 *Enlightment*

Permeating throughout the material, enlightenment conditions are to be taken quite literally in Per Olaf Fjeld and Emily Randall Fjeld's works. Carefully choreographed with almost Manichean zest, a fine dualistic, complementary quest with its opposite is perpetuated in the process.

The apparently simple wooden window-shutter devices installed in the Fjeld's country home embody this delicate condition: Acknowledging and celebrating the daily reoccurrences of dawn, midday and dusk, the contrivances carefully embed and integrate the immateriality of light and shadow, via invited calibrations into the quotidian.

Practising and re-introducing the time-honed act of *mørkning*, the now almost extinct Scandinavian practice of patiently awaiting darkness at dusk, the devices enable slow fine-tuning with a palette of much darker tonalities.

Similar day-to-day conditions are toyed with perceptive spirituality in the delicate unfolding of the many Japanese inspired wooden lamps contraptions, more recent products of patient basement research by Per Olaf Fjeld, now surfacing.

Likewise: light and shadow conditions remain meticulously trapped and domesticated in the many, early Randall Fjeld art-works: fine layering of glazed conditions, superimposed, polka-dotted and grid-ordered into malleable spiritual-boxed sensual matrixes, to be re-opened.

Clear-cut minimal, in their condensed, light-felt assemblage: Thus in a sense, re-introducing practice of *forgetting the names of the things one sees*.

The sub-division of art pieces, furniture and other fixtures might thus indeed need revision: In the more intense scrutinizing of the work(s), definitions tend to fall apart. No grey zones, but a rising, acute awareness of more copious, inclusive phenomena, transcending functionalities and denominations in the couples works.

Do try to sit on one of the chairs in the exhibition space while studying the intricate lamps light-emanations; Try then gazing out of the window-shutter-panes, one eye fixed on an adjacent art-piece in the exhibition space; Silent and intensely memorable tactile bits of a larger puzzle, giving rise to intense, fruitful speculations. What exactly to label those arte-facts, then?

05 *Order*

One very central condition apparent in *Studiowork* is a definite, general sense of order; An Order following (if obliquely) Louis I. Kahn's *dictum*, yet maintaining a distinct and somewhat diplomatic aloofness.

One could even venture so far as to assert: that a *playful* aloofness, *ordered*, is at stake in the work(s). Underlying, genuine generative ordering principles maintain the structure, albeit with fine inbuilt anomalies: Generating a

poetics of simple tectonics through distinctive beats, elaborate rhythms & syncopated, repetitive garland spreads.

In *Studioworks* we are given the possibility of exploring spatio-temporal matter(s) via minute, or oblique discoveries: *Order* obviously visible, and on other levels, in seemingly hidden patterns, embedded in matter.

Forming a peculiar phenomenology of perception, the material in *Studiowork* nevertheless re-forms both rational, conceptual energy fields, as well as permeating, with extreme firmness, embodied, intuitive sensual territories.

On one side of the scale, architectural works, on the other, smaller art-work pieces; Toggling in between, the aforementioned furniture and other interior fittings. A game of permutations, of definitions: A condition of logical or comprehensible arrangement among the separate elements of a group. Conditions of generic and particular perpetually intertwined.

Per Olaf Fjeld and Emily Randall Fjeld's ordering principles emanate with a serial humming. They perpetrate simple addition principles, glued, plied and bonded, into archaic shape, not even fearing states of symmetry. Distinct patterns appear to be constantly re-arranged and shuffled about, slowly weaved into underlying grid-like states. These particular inter-lacings are both foundation and construct at once, oscillating between states of mute abstraction and very concrete matter, resulting in sensuous states of tactile bliss.

Within all this exposed matter, degrees of quality or importance can be assessed, in the sequence or the arrangement of the successive arte-facts, thus becoming the sum of the exponents to which the variables in the term are raised.

06 *Simultaneity*

Although the *Studiowork* material is exposed, thus laid bare and classifiable, it remains a unique situation on many levels. While exhibited architectural material *per se* mostly represents via scale models, drawings, photographs and other relevant paraphernalia, Per Olaf Fjeld and Emily Randall Fjeld's *Studiowork* includes one more, crucial dimension.

While most of the presented architectural works are given generous study conditions, fulfilling both aesthetic and didactic relevancies, the actual *piece de resistance* consist of the careful design, manufacture and placement of the open, interlocking spatial wooden elements.

Performing *Janus* like duties on many levels, the devices permit the attentive embedment of the many furniture and art pieces in synchronous realms. An intricate territory of apparently contradicting terms, reconciling opposites into a benevolent, multi-faceted universe. In- and Out-sides merge, domestic situations mutating into consecrated *situs*, achieving a perfect moving blend of extreme *stasis* and elaborate, fixed rotations.

Transfixed in such precise manners, all *Studiowork's* elements interconnectivity do allow for bursts of intense sensuous presence, transcending time and place, resolving usual classification divides. Simultaneously achieving a sharpened *counterpoint* state with the inclusion of the carefully chosen text fragments and quotes from the Fjeld's written work applied on the panel walls.

In its simple, straight-forward *grandeur*, the exhibited works bring forward precise shards of seemingly bygone areas, while propelling the assorted amalgam with intense freshness into a concise present. An open proposal to renewed studies in Nordic matters, with exceptionally fine detours included.

The actual unveiling of Per Olaf and Emily Randall Fjeld's works enables the propelling of personal, specific artistic dimensions into broader territories of concerned, sensuous humanism: A poetics of integrity, lyrical beauty and ethical depth, exalting everydayday miracles, giving us fresh access to reality.