

PRESS PACK

DAN WOLGERS

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Tiden och den närvarande frånvaron

Den som ger sig tid att mer ingående studera Dan Wolgers objekt kommer att få uppleva något mycket spännande. Beträktaren finner att en del av objekten tar upp till diskussion viktiga metafysiska och existentiella problem, att stor möda lagts ned på att framkalla bestämda associationsbanor och blockera andra. Det kinetiska elementet är här viktigt. I utgångsläget framlockas vissa tankar, en känsla av förståelse uppstår hos betraktaren. Sedan händer något oväntat. En låda knackar. En liten spånkorg upprepar vår kritiska röst (kommenterar oss som vi kommenterat den). En barnröst skriker ur ett kvinnobröst när vi drar nappen ur bröstvårtan. Vi tvingas att revidera vårt första och kanske förhastade intryck – tidigare tankebanor stängs, nya kommer till. En märklig dialog har uppstått mellan objekt och betraktare. En dialog som inte är avslutad för att objektet återtar sin utgångsposition. Den fortgår och förnyas med varje ny rörelsecykel.

Många rusar stressade och lätt förvirrade genom livet. Vi kastar oss mellan blöjbyten, affärsluncher och pendeltåg. Hela tiden med en gnagande känsla av att inte hinna med. Tiden räcker helt enkelt inte till. Kvällen och med den natten kommer för fort.

Men vad är tid? Är tid vad mitt armbandsur visar? Är det cesiumatomens periodiska vibrationer? Är det förändringar i mina medvetandeprocesser?

Gamle kyrkofader Augustinus har sagt att om ingen frågar honom, vet han vad tid är. Men närhelst någon ber honom att förklara vad tid är, vet han det inte. Det krävs ett visst mått av envishet för att inte ge upp inför denna typ av svårbemästrade metafysiska problem. Men när alla goda idéer visat sig fruktlösa, när problemets lösning känns alltför avlägset, kan det vara befriande att få ta del av Dan Wolgers självständiga och chosefria behandling av frågan.

I många av Wolgers objekt är det just tiden som är den centrala komponenten. Dessa objekt kan ses som konstnärliga kommentarer till Augustinus bryderi. I andra fall är tiden/rörelsen endast en förmedlande länk. Tiden, manifesterad i rörelsen, är ett instrument med vars hjälp vissa sinnesstämningar framkallas hos betraktaren.

Ett objekt av den förstnämnda kategorin är en mindre malmklocka, av det slag man finner i klockstaplar och kyrktorn. Kläppen är ersatt av en jordglob. Klockans insida är målad med natthimmels blåsvarta färg och täckt med till synes oändligt

Time and the presence of absence

Anyone who takes the time to study Dan Wolgers' objects more closely will experience something very exciting. The beholder will discover that some of the objects discuss important metaphysical and existential problems, and that great care has been exerted to open up certain sequences of associations and block others. The kinetic element is important here. At the outset, certain ideas are called forth, a feeling of understanding builds up in the beholder. Then something unexpected happens. A box creaks. A little basket echoes our critical voice (passes comments on us just as we have commented on it). A child's voice cries from a woman's breast when we pull the pacifier out of the nipple. We are compelled to revise our first and perhaps all too precipitate impressions—the initial trains of thought close, and new ones open up. A curious dialogue has arisen between the object and the beholder, a dialogue that is not necessarily concluded because the object returns to its original position. It continues and is renewed with every new cycle of motion.

Many people rush through life constantly under pressure and slightly bewildered. We dash from one thing to another; from changing nappies to business lunches to commuter trains. All the time we have this nagging feeling of not being able to keep up. There is not enough time quite simply. Evening and nightfall come too rapidly.

But what is time? Is time what my watch shows? Is it the periodic vibrations of the caesium atom? Is it the changes in my mental processes?

The old church father Augustine said that if no one asks him, then he knows what time is. But as soon as anyone asks him to explain what time is, he does not know. It takes some degree of persistence not to give up in the face of this type of difficult metaphysical problem. But when every bright idea has proved useless, when the solution to the problem seems as remote as ever, it may be a relief to study Dan Wolgers' independent and uncluttered treatment of the question.

In many of Wolgers' objects, time is the key component. These objects can be regarded as artistic commentaries on Augustine's quandary. In other cases, time/motion is merely a mediating link. Time manifested in motion is an instrument with whose assistance particular moods are called forth in the observer.

många små vita prickar. Objektet ger betraktaren en mycket intensiv upplevelse av vår isolering och litenhet i ett gigantiskt universum – av hur vi är fångade i *tiden*. Insidans form ger associationer till fysikens krökta rum och dess helt svartfärgade botten ger oss en känsla av att tiden obönhörligen drar oss in i ett absolut mörker.

När man funderar över frågan "Vad är tid?" är det viktigt att särskilja upplevelsen av tid från den verkliga tiden. Endast den som har en önskan att vara ensam i universum, endast solipsisten, kan med bibehållen konsistens förneka en verklig tid oberoende av upplevelser och mätningar.

I en installation som Wolgers gjorde i ett lusthus på Skeppsholmen i Stockholm kommer denna skillnad mellan upplevd och verklig tid klart till uttryck. På ena väggen inne i lusthuset monterades stora smala rullar av vitt papper och små svarta motorer i rad, grupperade parvis. Papperet i de vita rullarna matades igenom de svarta motorerna med varierande hastighet. Efter hand bildades större eller mindre högar av ringlande vita pappersremsor under var och en av motorerna. Tiden ringlade ner längs väggarna. Några rullar tömdes snabbt på sitt papper. Tiden gick mycket fort när man betraktade dessa. På andra märktes det knappt att något papper matats igenom motorn. Här, bara några decimeter från den andra rullen, tycktes tiden gå mycket långsamt, nästan stå still. Men den verkliga tiden har ingen hastighet. Vad skulle dess hastighet vara? Sekunder per sekund? Den verkliga tiden går varken långsamt eller fort. Wolgers installation visar på ett träffande sätt hur godtycklig vår tidmätning är, hur viktigt det är att inte förväxla den upplevda tiden med den verkliga tiden, hur konfliktfyllda och motstridiga våra känslor inför tiden är.

I ett annat objekt har Wolgers utgått från en kyrka, av det slag som används till modelljärnvägar. Bredvid kyrkan står en stor streckgubbsliknande individ. Figurens huvud är en röd plastros och i sina händer håller den ett dallrigt plastskelett. Plötsligt rycker figuren till och smäller skelettet med kraft i kyrktornet. Många blir säkerligen obehagligt berörda av detta objekt (vilket givetvis också är meningen). Men varför känner vi oss illa till mods? Är det för att vi medvetet eller omedvetet kommer att tänka på den "utmätta tiden" – på vår oundvikliga död? Hur våra korta liv helt är i naturens eller Guds eller slumpens händer (vad vi nu föredrar att tro på).

Ett objekt där tiden/rörelsen används som förmedlande länk är Jesusklockan. Urtavlan är ett collage av två mycket kända målningar. Jesus ansikte är hämtat från Leonardo da Vincis "Nattvarden" och den vackra kvinnan är målad av den venetianske 1500-talsmålaren Tintoretto. Kvinnan, kurtisanen Verónica Franco, blottar av för oss oförklarlig anledning sina bröst. I Wolgers collage skymmer hon Jesus på ett sådant sätt att man upplever att hon är en naturlig del av hans ansikte. Jesus hår är hennes själ och axlar, hon är i hans tankar, hans ögon är hennes bröstvårtor. Hans outtröttligt sökande ögon betraktar världen genom kvinnan – genom demimonden.

One object in the first-mentioned category is a smallish iron bell of the kind found in belfries and bell-towers. The clapper has been replaced by a globe of the world. The inside of the bell is painted the bluish-black colour of the night sky and covered with apparently countless tiny white dots. The object gives the beholder a very intense experience of our isolation and minuteness in a gigantic universe—of how we are imprisoned in *time*. The shape of the inside gives rise to associations with the curved spaces of physics and its pitch-black bottom gives us a feeling of time inexorably drawing us down into total darkness.

In pondering the question "What is time?", one has to remember to distinguish the experience of time from real time. Only someone who has a desire to be alone in the universe, only the solipsist, if he is to maintain consistency, is able to deny the existence of real time regardless of experiences and measurements.

In an installation that Wolgers made in a gazebo at Skeppsholmen in Stockholm, this distinction between experienced and real time was lucidly expressed. On one wall inside the gazebo were fitted large narrow rolls of white paper and small black engines, arranged in pairs in a row. The paper in the white rolls was fed through the black engines at varying speeds. Gradually, large or small piles of curling white paper strips formed underneath each of the engines. Time unwound along the walls. Some rolls were rapidly emptied. Time passed very quickly while you were watching them. On others, you scarcely noticed that the paper had been fed through the engine. Here, only a few inches away from the next roll, time seemed to be passing very slowly, almost standing still. But real time has no speed. What would its speed be? Seconds per second? Real time goes neither slowly nor quickly. Wolgers' installation displays in a striking way how arbitrary measurements of time are, how important it is not to confuse the time experienced with real time, however conflicting and contradictory our feelings about time may be.

In another object, Wolgers has started out from a church, the kind used with a model railway. Beside the church stands a tall figure resembling a matchstick man. The head of the figure is a red plastic rose and in its hands it is holding a quivering plastic skeleton. Suddenly the figure gives a start and knocks the skeleton hard against the church tower. Many people will certainly be unpleasantly affected by this object (which is the idea, of course). But why do we feel ill at ease? Is it because consciously or unconsciously, we are reminded of our "allotted span"—of the inevitability of death, that our lives are totally in Nature's or God's or Fate's hands (whatever we happen to believe in).

One object in which time/motion is used as a mediating link is the Jesus-clock. The face of the clock is a collage of two famous paintings. The face of Jesus is taken from Leonardo da Vinci's "The Last Supper" and the beautiful woman was painted by the 16th century Venetian painter Tintoretto. The woman, Veronica Franco, a courtesan, uncovers her breasts for a reason unknown to us. In Wolgers' collage, she obscures Jesus in such a way that

Det är intressant att notera att även i Wolgers icke-rörliga objekt är vår upplevelse av tiden betydelsefull. Malmklockan med stjärnhimmeln är ett ypperligt exempel på detta. Men också ett par gammaldags hörlurar där lurarna ersatts med två klockor av märket Europa. I stället för att lyssna på musik lyssnar vi på tiden, tiden av märket Europa.

Tiden är av fundamental betydelse för Wolgers objekt. Deras konstruktion är sådan att den verkliga tiden/rörelsen, men framförallt vår upplevelse av tid och rörelse, skapar konstupplevelsen. Utan rörelsen, utan tiden, skulle vissa av Wolgers objekt förlora sin konstnärliga kraft.

Aristoteles säger i *Metafysiken* att:

Rörelsen kan nu varken uppkomma eller gå under, ty den har alltid varit. Ej heller kan tiden det, ty det kan inte finnas något före eller efter, om inte tiden finns. Rörelsen är således lika beständig som tiden; ty tiden är antingen detsamma som rörelsen eller en bestämning hos den.

Den som på rooseumutställningen vandrar fram och tillbaka längs Wolgers installation av manipulerade fotografier förstår vad Aristoteles haft i tankarna. Här är det den egna rörelsen som bidrar till tidsupplevelsen – till upplevelsen av förändring.

Aristoteles lära om tid och rörelse leder också tankarna till ett annat av objekten på denna utställning. För att få ordning i sitt metafysiska system av cirkelrörelser tvingades Aristoteles att införa vad han kallar "den förste röraren" – han som orörlig och evig satte allt i rörelse. Jag kan inte låta bli att tänka den hädiska tanken att det är just denne förste rörare som får kaffet i Wolgers kopp att rotera. Vem skulle det annars vara som såg till att det ständigt virvlade runt i koppen?

Det ligger i människans natur att försöka finna enkla, ibland alltför enkla, förklaringar till olika slags skeenden. Om kaffe virvlar runt i en kopp förutsätter vi att en person med sin tesked har satt det i rörelse. Kanske skall en sockerbit lösas upp innan kaffet avsmakas. Vad vore annars meningen med att kaffet rördes om? Vi vill inte finna *frånvaro* när erfarenheten kräver *närvaro*.

Samma känsla av närvaro av en frånvarande person får man inför ett annat av Wolgers objekt. Objektet, ett till synes massivt kolsvart järnklot, stort som en kulstötningsskula, rullar av sig själv runt i rummet. Det korsar golvet, stöter i en vägg eller ett bordsben, stannar upp, ändrar riktning och tar ny fart över till den motsatta sidan. I hörn stannar det lite längre, gungar lätt fram och tillbaka, som om det medvetet sökte en väg ut i rummet. Den som några minuter studerat klotets framfart frågar sig "Vem eller vad sätter det i rörelse?". Man saknar det lekande barnet eller, varför inte, den förste röraren.

Men den paradoxala känslan av en närvarande frånvaro kommer kanske ändå klarast till uttryck i ovan nämnda installation av fotografier. Trots sin fysiska frånvaro är Wolgers synnerligen närvarande. Han granskar betraktarna lika intensivt som de studerar hans objekt. Ingen undgår hans iakttagande blick. Oavsett

we feel that she is a natural part of his face. Jesus' hair is her shawl and shoulders; she is in his thoughts; his eyes are her nipples. His tirelessly searching eyes look at the world through the woman—through the demi-monde.

It is interesting to note that even in Wolgers' non-mobile objects our experience of time is significant. The iron bell with the starry sky is a superb example of this. But there is also a pair of old-fashioned earphones, the earpieces having been replaced by two clocks bearing the trademark Europa (Europe). Instead of listening to music, we listen to time, the Europe brand of time.

Time is of fundamental importance to Wolgers' objects. Their construction is such that real time/motion, but above all our experience of time and motion, creates the art experience. Without motion, without time, some of Wolgers' objects would lose their artistic force.

Aristotle states in his *Metaphysics*:

It is impossible, however, that motion should be generable or perishable; it must always have existed. Nor can time come into being or cease to be; for there cannot be a 'before' or 'after' when there is no time. Movement, then, is also continuous in the sense in which time is, for time is either the same thing as motion or an attribute of it....

Visitors to the Roosevelt show who stroll back and forth in front of Wolgers' installation of manipulated photographs will understand what Aristotle had in mind. Here it is one's own motion that contributes to the experience of time—the experience of change.

Aristotle's doctrine of time and motion also leads one's thoughts to another of the objects at this show. To set his metaphysical system of circular motions in order, Aristotle was forced to introduce what he calls "the prime mover"—he who unmoving and eternal set everything moving. I cannot help thinking the blasphemous thought that it is this very prime mover that makes the coffee in Wolgers' cup rotate. Who else could it be that made sure the coffee continually swirled about in it?

It is man's nature to try to find simple, on occasion far too simple, explanations of different kinds of events. If coffee swirls round in a cup, we assume that a person with a teaspoon set it in motion. Maybe a lump of sugar is to be dissolved before the coffee is tasted. What would be the point of stirring the coffee otherwise? We do not want to find *absence* when experience demands *presence*.

The same feeling of the presence of an absent person emanates from another of Wolgers' objects. This object, an apparently massive coal-black ball of iron as big as the shot used in putting the shot, rolls around by itself in the room. It crosses the floor, bumps into a wall or a table leg, stops, changes direction and sets off again to the opposite side. In the corner, it stops a little longer, rocking to and fro, as if deliberately seeking a way

hur vi rör oss i rummet, eller hur många vi är, ser han oss alla på samma sätt som vi ser honom. Rollerna är omkastade. Wolgers har med sin närvarande frånvaro förvandlat oss till ett av utställningens objekt.

Denna typ av objekt (eller installationer) tvingar oss att ifrågasätta vårt gängse sätt att betrakta och systematisera tillvaron. Våra invanda handlingsmönster räcker inte längre till. Vi tvingas till något så "obehagligt" som att tänka efter för att revidera våra utnötta schabloner.

Men det som kanske fascinerar mest av allt hos Wolgers objekt är att de är öppna. Öppna i den meningen att de tillåter många tolkningar. De initierar en diskussion. Visserligen bestämmer de i hög grad vilket ämne som skall behandlas, men vad som kommer ut av detta "samtal" beror i lika hög grad på vilka kunskaper och erfarenheter betraktaren har med sig. Objektet erbjuder dem som vill ge sig in i debatten ett spännande intellektuellt motstånd. De ger – på ett abstrakt och mycket oförklarligt sätt – nya insikter och vidgad kunskap.

Nils-Eric Sahlin

out into the room. After studying the ball for a few minutes, the beholder wonders "Who or what set it going?". One looks for the child playing or, why not the prime mover?

But the paradoxical feeling of the presence of absence is after all most clearly expressed in the photo installation mentioned above. Despite his being absent physically, Wolgers is very much present. He scrutinizes the viewers as intently as they study his objects. No one escapes his observant gaze. No matter how we move in the room, or how many of us there are, he sees us all in the same way as we see him. The roles are reversed. Wolgers with his presence of absence has transformed us into one of the objects in the show.

This type of object (or installation) compels us to question our current way of looking at and systematizing reality. Our ingrained patterns of behaviour are no longer sufficient. We are forced to do something as "unpleasant" as thinking twice in order to revise our outworn clichés.

But what is perhaps most fascinating about Wolgers' objects is that they are open—open in the sense that they allow many interpretations. They initiate a discussion. Admittedly they decide to a great extent what topic will be dealt with but what emerges from these "conversations" depends equally on what knowledge and experience the beholder himself possesses. The objects offer those who want to get involved in the discussion an exciting intellectual resistance. In an abstract and inexplicable way, they give us fresh insights and wider knowledge.

(Translated by Muriel Larsson)

Nils-Eric Sahlin

Dan Wolgers Sweden

Dan Wolgers enjoys the playful quality of objects and their relationship to language. He takes simple found objects and finds formal possibilities for their combination into new sculptural wholes. Some of these are almost design exercises, where the pleasure of discovery is in the fact that the objects fit together and still function (such as his bundles of light bulbs).

Other pieces have narrative possibilities and visual/verbal play—sometimes punning, sometimes poetic. In this exhibition, Wolgers will be looking at a complicated space with its own set of problems (for example a row of windows and columns), and devising an installation that incorporates these features into a new relationship, using materials and objects found in Sydney.

In October 1991 Wolgers had an exhibition where an advertising agency was invited to produce the works. He gave them no guidelines, leaving aesthetic and conceptual choices to them. He then signed the works.

He later produced a cover design for the Stockholm Yellow Pages with his name and number as the major graphic next to the K-Ö. He did a performance in which he appeared 'nude' in magazines, his face on a female body. He placed his car in the 'Friends of the Museum' booth at the Stockholm Art Fair. It completely filled the space, denying all access to the exhibiting space.

These events and others like them have caused an extraordinary response. Wolgers became the subject of major attacks by the popular press, and received twelve death threats. It is clear that despite the history of conceptual art and more recent games of fictive reality, Sweden is not ready for this contextual challenge.

Wolgers visited Sydney to prepare his work, and realised that his problems of context would be even greater in the Biennale. His work will be a response to this problem.

Anthony Bond

Dan Wolgers
Object, 1991
Plaster
Photo: Jan Almeré

Dan Wolgers' art

Don't try to define the meaning of humour. First of all, because often what is called humour is not in the least funny, just mannerisms or 'know-it-all' attitudes and hence not really worth your while; secondly because it is so difficult to express true humour in words.

On the whole wariness seems to be called for when something is described as 'having a humorous approach'. It is only natural to feel uneasy when hearing the word 'humour' mentioned. The main reason for this is probably the semantic fuzziness of the word. 'Having a humorous approach' is a shallow, indeed empty phrase. At times, there is also something elusive and evasive about it; the whole thing is a joke, so we don't have to take it seriously.

Nevertheless, what is being discussed here is one of the greatest stimuli of life, the salt of the earth. We are talking about a factor which is as fragile as a butterfly, which is elusive, hard to grasp, and indefinable. Once you think you have captured it, you have in fact lost it.

In the field of art humour is a fickle friend. Many of the silliest exponents of modern art have been called humorous. Just think of certain 'peace monuments'.

Kierkegaard holds that humour is the only road leading to truth and real knowledge. According to Kierkegaard neither science nor art can illuminate the truth of a matter as efficiently as can humour. In other words, humour can bring a situation to a head, quickly demonstrating the absurdity of the seemingly reasonable, illuminating or exposing that which is not in accordance with reason. Quickness is a component part of humour – just think of the related phrase 'quick wit'.

What is funny must be shocking or must at least contain an unexpected element, a revealing observation, an invention, something new, a creation. If this element is picturesque, i.e. sensational or grotesque and exaggerated, so much the better.

In art humour is often to be found on the border between reason and absurdity, doing a balancing act where it is essential to land on the feet when the spectators have had enough. But a 'humorous' statement can also consist in expressing the obvious, what we all know, in a pointed manner.

Humour allows us to forget, for a while, our cluelessness in the face of a universe that is perhaps not inimical but at any rate unfathomable. Unlike the witticism, humour is not a goal in itself. When it is powerful it contains criticism and protest. It is as simple as this: humour excites laughter. Even the mightiest dictator is powerless against laughter. Humour seldom kills, though. You only feel its pin-pricks. It is obvious that the essence of humour is intangible: humour, comedy, jokes, irony, laughter, witticisms, fun, the grotesque, the absurd... The ancient Greeks were right when relegating humour to the realm of intangible fluids.

There is a form of humour which is called irony. This does not have to be

taken into account in connection with Dan Wolgers' art, which consists in changing proportions, diminishing what is big, enlarging what is small. Irony is often the simplest and most wicked form of humour.

In Dan Wolgers' art humour often takes the form of provocation, challenge, or spite. Questions and statements about the condition of art are brought to a head in such a way that we ask ourselves where they are all heading. Finally it turns out that they were heading in different directions, depending on those who feel challenged or provoked. Dan Wolgers dances on a slender thread with a skill and an elegance which makes us sit up and notice. Dan Wolgers is in opposition to a lot of things, but in a way which makes you feel that together with him you are beyond good and evil, because he makes you laugh.

When in Dan Wolgers' sculptures you are confronted with elements emanating from the ocean of sadness in which the stock of the second-hand stores is swimming, you feel inclined to agree with Nietzsche that humour is the best defence against the melancholy of the commonplace. Dan Wolgers accepts the disheartening challenge given by the second-hand stores. It's the old rigmarole about the transitory nature of happiness, about futility and wear. With the help of humour Dan Wolgers turns the tables on dreariness. In his hands dreariness becomes not merely bearable, it becomes entertaining and stimulating. He gives these sorry objects a new life, a better life which they may not always deserve.

These objects are sparked by the shift from banality to spirituality. Wolgers' sculptures might seem pseudo-important or even elementary if it were not for one important fact. There is nothing more important than combating dreariness. The great sculptor Alexander Calder formulated this most succinctly in terms of sculpture when he snarled: 'one more Moore.'

Dan Wolgers' art is extremely **mental**, i.e. it appeals above all to the intellect and the emotions. During the better part of this century art was mainly **visual**; it appealed to the eyes, it presented a visual beauty. Marcel Duchamp is the artist who has defended intellectual art since the beginning of the 1900s. With a great deal of force and tenacity he has insisted that art is a **cosa mentale**. The long and sterile period after WW II, 1945–1955, is a good example of a time when visual art had the upper hand. When Marcel Duchamp returned to Paris from the U.S. in 1954 he brought the issue to a head in an interview. The latter part of the century has come to witness the flourishing of a more speculative or spiritual art, even if other approaches have developed parallelly.

In the world we are living in technology plays an important part. Our relation to technology is characterised by a lack of dignity. We become angry when the car breaks down; the abstract and elusive nature of electronics makes many of us feel powerless. In our everyday world of hassles and demands modern man tends to feel the victim of the erratic workings of technology, his whimsical descendant.

The characteristic traits of Dan Wolgers' approach to technology can briefly be described as follows: Dan Wolgers is friendly and humane. To elucidate what I mean – if this is at all possible – an anecdote told by a



Oskar Andersson: 'The Man Who Does Whatever He Wants.'
(Söndags-Nisse no. 42/1905).

friend of mine, the Turkish-Armenian artist Sarkis, might come in handy. He and his daughter Elvan were visiting the part of the Venice Biennale called 'Aperto.' Little by little, more and more dejected, they at long last reached the last little bay where they only saw a small waste-paper basket made of birch-bark. Sarkis said to his daughter indignantly: 'But there's nothing here.' The waste-paper basket replied in Turkish: 'But there's nothing here.' If I have understood Sarkis correctly, to him this was the best thing about the Biennial that year.

Dan Wolgers questions the mastery of technology with sensibility and elegance. His approach to technology is characterised by a certain raillery, a certain lightness of tone which is both charming and impressive. It is often the case that when grappling with major issues art tends to become gloomy rather than stimulating. Rarely have basic technological phenomena such as 'feedback' been demonstrated so sublimely.

Chance, this evasive, ever-present companion that seems to play such an important role in our lives has been made into an important figure in Dan Wolgers' art. This meddlesome clown enacts a farce, stage-managed by Dan Wolgers, where the tragicomedy of everyday life explodes in a paroxysm, as for example in *Light Bulb and Switches* 1992–1995.

When studying Dan Wolgers' works one sometimes comes to think of O.A., Oskar Andersson, the great draughtsman at the beginning of the century, the creator of 'The Man Who Does Whatever He Wants.' O.A.'s drawings also display the ease and elegance when treating existential issues that is the very core of humour.

Pontus Hultén

Frieze, Issue #33, March–April 1997

Dan Wolgers: 120 Works 1977–1996

SILANDER & FROMHOLTZ, STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN

Dan Wolgers is probably the best-known conceptual artist in Sweden, which doesn't mean to say that he is much loved by the general public. On the contrary, his art and persona epitomise what people outside the tight circle of the art world tend to hate about contemporary art. Since it appears incomprehensible and pointless, it can't be anything but pretentious and bogus, and Wolgers' success is the final proof of that.

The hostility started to build up around 1991 when Wolgers, instead of showing his own artworks, hired an advertising agency to mount an exhibition in his name at one of Stockholm's leading galleries - he arrived at the opening with as little knowledge about the show as other visitors. In 1992, when commissioned to make a cover project for the Stockholm Yellow Pages (all Swedish phone books had art covers that year), he presented only his own name and (real) phone number - 08 600 443 73. People weren't too happy about that either, and called up the artist to make sure he knew their point of view.

The final peak of irritation was reached some months later in an episode at the Liljevalchs gallery, a traditional art venue in the Swedish capital. Wolgers accepted the invitation to participate in a group show, but instead of submitting objects for display, he decided to remove some instead. He stole two quite valuable benches and took them to the Stockholm Auction rooms, where they were sold a few days before the opening. At the exhibition there was nothing to be seen apart from a plate with the artist's name.

An interesting process, intertwining questions of aesthetics and law, followed: a lawsuit was filed against him by two private citizens, and after a long and absurd trial (the transcript of which is worthy of publication), he was found guilty of misappropriation. The notification of the verdict was mailed to the artist, who immediately - without even opening the envelope - sold it to a Norwegian collector.

From an international point of view these provocations may not appear artistically ground-breaking, but the kind of attention they received in the tabloid press and on TV talk shows, where art is never normally discussed, was exceptional.

What strikes me when reading the new book, *Dan Wolgers: 120 Works 1977-1996*, is the extent to which these spectacular projects from the 90s were anticipated by his early objects and 'machines', where an analogous logic is already at work. A kind of short-circuiting is common to many of his humorous mechanical pieces: if a machine is expected to produce a certain result, Wolgers, through subtle manipulations, makes sure the outcome is the exact opposite. Sometimes the whole thing self-destructs, which, for some reason, is even funnier.

When Wolgers treats the whole art situation as a kind of mechanical device, a comparable chaos results. If you turn a single element the wrong way around - remove an object from an exhibition instead of supplying one, for instance - the entire social 'machine' breaks down, and a new process begins, one that includes confusion, law suits and absurd trials. No doubt, the unpredictable steps of this process are what primarily interest Wolgers, rather than the quite predictable media turmoil.

Pontus Hultén's short essay focuses on Wolgers' use of old and dreary gadgets: 'In his hands dreariness becomes not merely bearable, it becomes entertaining and stimulating. He gives these sorry objects a new life, a better life which they may not always deserve'. This humorous art, Hultén concludes, is extremely cerebral - it takes place in your head, but supplies no visual beauty or pleasure. In that respect, Wolgers is a follower of Duchamp.

Comparisons with Duchamp belong to those ubiquitous manoeuvres most essays on contemporary art would do better without, but since it's Hultén writing I guess it's okay. Wolgers does in fact seem to share not only Duchamp's dislike of 'retinal' art, but also his obsession with optical phenomena and the mechanical workings of the eye. In the rather grotesque *Portrait of the Artist* (1996), for instance, you can look at two red eyeballs through a stereoscope, and eventually make them merge into one big, bloody eye.

A similar mechanism is at work in *To be looked at, from a distance, with eyes crossed* (1995), which shows two photographs of the artist, accompanied by the instructions: 'If you try to meet my gaze in the two pictures by squinting, a third picture emerges in the middle. If you focus on it, it becomes three-dimensional'. Originally, the work was presented in one of the main daily papers in Sweden. That day, a large part of the population travelled to work with their eyes crossed.

Daniel Birnbaum

MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE

*The love-hate relationship between
art and advertising*

How many times have you stared at an advertisement, TV commercial, or music video and wondered: Where has the advertising agency stolen this idea? This is especially true if you're moderately interested in art. The advertising industry steals; everyone knows that. And both historical and contemporary art provide a deep source for plundering.

At least this is the general assumption about the relationship between art and advertising. Of course, it isn't true. The relationship between art and advertising is much more complicated. Art steals from advertising too. And the relationship can best be described as one of both love and hate. Talented artists keep a curious eye on talented art directors and vice versa.



DAN WOLGERS
INSTALLATION VIEW AT
GALLERI LARS BOHMAN
1991

One of the more interesting examples from recent years of the relationship between art and advertising is the work of the Swedish artist, Dan Wolgers. In 1991 he hired the advertising agency Rififi to create an exhibition for him at Galleri Lars Bohman in Stockholm. He offered them 50,000 Swedish kronor on the condition that they neither promote themselves nor intervene in the normal work in the gallery. The agency accepted the proposal, and Wolgers met them once for ten minutes and then not again until the opening.

This arrangement resulted in a series of porcelain plates with motifs of the supermodel Linda Evangelista's face. The exhibition also included eight pedestals with eight identical photographs of a Marilyn Monroe look-alike. On one of the walls hung a painting of Wolgers' name in a signature similar to Disney's. A stool with a photo of a penis on it stood in a corner. Risqué and provocative. Cool and ironic. It's as if the agency had studied Wolgers' artistic background as well as the discussion on postmodernism in the early 1990s. It appeared as if Dan Wolgers had created the exhibition himself.

One could say that Wolgers initiated a process of producing a portrait of himself as an

artist. He knew as little as anyone about how the exhibition would look when he came to the opening. The exhibition was a portrait of Dan Wolgers' work as an artist, created by Rififi, but initiated by Wolgers himself. Ideas and facts, impressions and presumptions about Dan Wolgers were blended in a highly sophisticated manner. It's as if Wolgers used the agency as an instrument for finding out who he really is, or at least what kind of art he makes. He used the agency to step out of himself and to see himself through someone else's eyes.

The message of deconstruction

Dan Wolgers' exhibition in 1991 descended from a discussion in art that originated with Marcel Duchamp's so-called readymades. When Duchamp exhibited *Bottle Rack* in 1914, it was just an ordinary bottle rack that he bought at the hardware store Bazaar de l'Hôtel de Ville in central Paris. But by showing this ordinary object in a totally different setting—in an art context—the object was suddenly given a totally different meaning. However, it's not so easy to determine just what this meaning is. What Duchamp was interested in examining was the idea that an object could possess different meanings. Take, for example, his *Apolinère Enameled* from 1916–17. It is an advertisement for Sampoline enamel paint in which Duchamp, by simply replacing a few letters, created a completely new work (in this case, a small jest to his poet-friend Guillaume Apollinaire).

It was probably no coincidence that Duchamp chose to work with ordinary objects such as a bottle rack or an advertisement. He was interested in how meaning was constructed—and could be deconstructed. And he was especially interested in industrialism's mass production of products, which brought with it new demands for creating a special aura or image around the products. Advertising, as we know, plays a crucial role in this. Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso were partly interested in the same issue when they created Cubism in the 1910s. By literally fragmenting the pictorial space of central perspective, which had dominated art until then, the Cubists introduced a new way of seeing. It's possible to perceive an object in many different ways, and an artwork needn't necessarily "represent" the object; it can also "interpret" the object abstractly. This new way of seeing inspired admen to develop advertising to what it is today. But it is also interesting to note how the



MARCEL DUCHAMP
APOLINÈRE ENAMELED
1916–1917

Absolut Vodka catalogue, text by John Peter Nilsson, 1999



Norrtälje Konsthall, 2000

Ur katalog: "Dan Wolgers tankeslussar"

text: Mats B.

Den tyske skeptikern Georg Christoph Lichtenberg funderade en gång på att göra en bladlös kniv utan skaft, han var en av dem som visste att man mycket lite vet; samtidigt som det blev mycket lite kvar öppnade det för de mest fantastiska möjligheter.

Jag är av princip emot principer, men min uppfattning är att paradoxer används för att fästa uppmärksamheten på idéer. De verkar bli till idébaserade cirklar, mer självgående än onda; de är sällan nollor upphöjda med två. Till skillnad mot ytlig bildning tycks paradoxen vara ett koncentrat av sammelsurium och sammanhang, som går att tillämpa på många andra områden än det som först möter blicken eller tanken. Att paradoxens självsyftande fröjd, som trots allt är otalig, skapar viss osäkerhet är enbart en fördel. Det finns ju bara en sak som är säker, nämligen att ingenting är säkert. Det medför att det inte är säkert att ingenting är säkert - och då kanske det är bäst att njuta i tysthet. Det finns de som helt envist insisterar på att talet är silver, att tigandet är guld. Sett ur det perspektivet formar Dan Wolgers ofta gyllene tillfällen för självprovning och kontemplation. Hans verk upplevs ibland som en nästan genomskinlig glassvan ensam med sig själv på en spegelsjö: man kan aldrig se den ena utan att tänka på den andra. I sin vagt dimmiga transparens kan de verka som visuella argument för ett synsätt där det är bättre att tänka på ingenting än på allting, de tycks svåra att beskriva, det är bara skillnaden som skiljer dem åt... Som Gustave Flaubert skrev: "Dårskap består i att vilja dra slutsatser."

Om man nu befinner sig i denna tomhet med ruter i, i detta tankesätt som funnits genom århundraden och på all fast mark och på allt vatten runt omkring, händer det ofta att man ser saker göras som nog inte borde ha gjorts. Att då själv inte välja är också ett val, men man är ändå inte inkonsekvent in absurdum: tids nog kommer vi alla i tid till vår egen död.

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From the catalog: "Dan Wolgers tankeslussar," Norrtälje Konsthall, 2000

text: Mats B.

The German skeptic Georg Christoph Lichtenberg once thought to make a bladeless knife without a handle, he was one of those who knew one knows very little; while there was very little left it opened up for the most amazing opportunities.

I am on principle against principles, but my understanding is that paradoxes are used to draw attention to ideas. They seem to be concept-based circles, more self-sustaining than evil, they are rarely zeros raised by two. Unlike the superficial knowledge the paradox seems to be a concentrate of hodgepodge and contexts, which can be applied in many other areas than what first meets the eye or thought.

That the paradoxes self-looking delight, which after all is non-total, creates some uncertainty is only an advantage. There's only one thing that is certain, namely, that nothing is certain. This means that it is not certain that nothing is certain - and then maybe it's best to enjoy in silence. There are those who quite stubbornly insist that to speak is silver, that being silent is gold. Seen from this perspective Dan Wolgers often shapes golden opportunities for self-examination and contemplation. His work sometimes is perceived as an almost transparent glass swan, alone with herself on a mirror lake: one can never see one without thinking of the other. In their vague hazy transparency, they can act as visual argument for an approach in which it is better to think about nothing than everything, they seem hard to describe, it's just the difference that separates them... As Gustave Flaubert wrote: "Folly consists in wanting to draw conclusions".

If you now find yourself in this emptiness with guts, in this mindset that has existed through the centuries and in all the land and all the water around, it often happens that you see things being made that probably should not have been made. To then not choose is also a choice, but it is still not inconsistent and absurdum: soon enough we will all be in time to our own death.

Grattis Dan (Congratulations Dan!)

Catalogue text by Annika Hansson Wretman

Published by The Swedish Arts Grants Committee, 2002

Foreword by the author:

I have had the pleasure to write a text on the occasion of that you have received Bildkonstnärsfondens stora stipendium (The Swedish Visual Arts Fund large grant). The task meant that I would write something about you and to you. But writing *about* and *to* at the same time seemed impossible, at least for me. The text on these pages is therefore directed to those who want to get some entrances to your work, so as I understand it and appreciate it.

Annika Hansson Wretman

There are some artists who seem to be connected to the outside world more than others. That means that there's something in the artist's gesture that engender greater responses or connotations with a larger audience than the informed art world. Dan Wolgers is one such artist - and in his case seems to strike a chord at separate sites in the human emotional register. For twenty years, his practice has engendered everything from admiration and respect, to irritation and angry letters to the editor in the Swedish newspapers. But no matter what kind of emotions his art has elicited from people, it is quite obvious that his work has contributed to shape our perception of what art is, and especially what art can be. Wolgers work seem to ask the basic question "Is it possible to do so?" and self- answer "Yes, it really is."

Some time ago I got commissioned by a magazine to interview Dan Wolgers before a retrospective exhibition of his oeuvre. The angle was already set - the conversation would focus on separate works and inspirations along Wolgers' fast and straightforward career. When I got to the interview the artist explained, politely but firmly, that all that stuff (his practice) rather was about an extremely lengthy braking distance. On the contrary of searching for new ideas, he did not really know how he could ever finish, as thing after thing continued to come into existence. About here, the idea for the interview collapsed, just as loudly as the whoopee cushion in Wolgers' crashing machine (1984). Wolgers also argued that he had not really evolved at all since 1981, the year that he made the small wooden box (see below). The rest, he said, is variations on the box, but is different physically.

This box thus appears to be a kind of core of Dan Wolgers' work. Right at this line I should therefore try to deliver a proposal on what this core may possibly consist of. I struggle but I can at least take a back way and describe how the box looks like and works. The work consists of small simple wooden box, which is fitted with a lever. When the person who wants to enjoy the work pokes the lever to open the box, the lid opens ajar (by an electric motor and a stick that pushes the cover up from the inside). Just at the moment when one takes for granted that the lid should be raised to reveal what's inside closing the box off and the lid slams down. The process takes only a few seconds and the whole thing is over before it has even begun. You are flabbergasted, astounded, and simply not really sure of what just happened, or what did not happen. And that is probably why you -however amused, irritated or puzzled – just can't resist pushing the lever again and again.

In almost all descriptions of Dan Wolgers' practice the word "humor" is commonly found, as in the argumentation of *The Swedish Visual Arts Fund* for the grant. But humor is also an ambiguous word, or rather, the meaning of it could be perceived quite differently. For my part, humor is not quite about jokes, rather about the ability to propose a new mind game or a new game rule to be used in familiar situations. In this way, humor is a possibility among other possibilities, unlike the joke that almost always calls out for an immediate laugh. Humor of a high and heartfelt kind may amuse the recipient for a long time, like a lingering heat – and that is at least how I now think about the humor in Wolgers' art.

I have no idea what Dan Wolgers prefers to be called - humorous, amusing, fun, or perhaps neither of it- but I happen to know who the artist himself thinks is fun, namely Marcel Duchamp. When Wolgers was assigned the mission to make art from and about the *Absolut's* vodka bottle, Duchamp served as particular prominent inspiration. This time the theme was *Absolut Original*, whereupon Wolgers wanted to give *Absolut* a copy that you could still call *the original*. Duchamp's bottle rack disappeared in 1914 but Wolgers got hold of a photo of it. Together with a blacksmith, he made a handmade replica of the bottle dryer that was supposed to have a mass-produced look just like Duchamp's own was. After six months of work, *Absolut* finally received an original replica of an original, which it anyhow exists hundreds of thousands of copies of (*Absolute Wolgers*, 2000). When the catalog was produced Wolgers was asked to include an example of a favorite work of art by another artist. He chose Duchamp's bottle rack but did instead publish a picture of his own copy, which caused a minor cyclone among the foundations that monitors the copyrights around Duchamp's works. Having that said, "Is it possible to do so?" "Yes, it really is."

Besides the fact that Dan Wolgers think that Marcel Duchamp is fun, his name is also hard to avoid when you're trying to get your head around the work of Wolgers. And if one is forced to find a label of his work it would be "conceptual art," or "idea-based art," that would be closest at hand. There are others that are better at analyzing what distinguishes Duchamp or conceptual art than I am. But it is still possible for me to see the link between Duchamp's use of everyday objects and Wolgers' work. However, he seems not so much to experiment with the status of everyday objects. It seems instead to be the actual combination, modification or supplement of everyday things and their material that interests him (this includes things like anachronistic ornaments or handicrafts – objects that are rejected by our times super designed homes that now once again gets a task). Wolgers' objects work usually as a kind of humorous and elegant rebuses - a sort of concept braids, but more straight on the target. A few examples among many is the drain cleaner that here is what constitute the backbone of a Jesus Crucifix (*Untitled*, 1988), Or *Souvenirs* 1988, where a fake plastic vomit decorates an oak surface meant to hang on the wall or put on the table, or his pierced silver cutlery (*Untitled*, 1997.) Again; "Is it possible to do so?" "Yes, it really is."

In other works by Dan Wolgers these aforementioned rebuses seems to be transformed into related tasks - i.e. things that should be solved – but these works differ in appearance. Wolgers' phone book is again one of many examples where his particular logic used in a consistent way and makes all fall into place in a very refined manner.

Ahead of the release of the phone book of Stockholm in 1992, the Telecommunications Authority commissioned several artists to design a cover of it each. To contribute with a picture of a work was completely out of the question for Wolgers -that would be to promote his own art. Instead, he wanted to find a way to make art out of the actual book. The solution

was to make each phone book to a single work of art in a particular edition. The edition was of course the one million two hundred thousand copies of the Yellow Pages that the Telecommunications Authority would hand out. In accordance with the directory's content Wolgers had his own phone nr printed on the cover of it (The number was to his studio). In this way, a work by artist Dan Wolgers was delivered to almost every Stockholm resident this year. A directory was saved at MoMA, New York and only phone subscribers in the Stockholm area know where the rest has disappeared.

But leaving out his name and telephone number on the front of a phone book also means responsibilities and commitment argues Dan Wolgers. Thousands upon thousands of people called his studio. When Wolgers was there, he answered, and when he was not, it took an answering machine to receive calls where the artist promised to call back. He did, which took six months of being four hours a day on the phone. One more time, "Is it possible to do so? " "Yes, it really is."

That same year, Dan Wolgers made an equally elegant equation but this time as a contribution to arts politics. Wolgers was asked to participate in the exhibition "Se människan" on Liljevalchs. At that time he usually turned down invitations group exhibitions at art galleries and museums. The reason that he said yes this time was that he wanted to point out why he several times earlier declined. The background to his statement was the fact that artists generally lost quite a bit of money when taking part in an exhibition like this, because they rarely or never received fair compensation. When they therefore were forced to decline they were criticized. Wolgers had no hope or aspiration to deliver a solution to the problem, but he saw an opportunity to make the art audiences aware of the circumstances of many of Sweden's current exhibitions.

Wolgers self-imposed task this time was to make both parties - artist and art gallery - satisfied and happy, seen from an economic as well as poetical perspective. He therefore decided to snatch an object from the gallery - that is, something that was in Liljevalchs ownership - and sell it. He examined the interior and the choice fell on a couple of benches that he considered the gallery would do just fine without. The Gallery Director at that time, who obviously had no idea about the plans, gave the artist permission to use them for his work. Wolgers brought the benches to *Stockholms auktionsverk* (Stockholm's oldest auction house) and had decided in advance that the money from the sale would go to materials he needed to make new work (namely a Fax switch, a switch type that does not exist anymore). So the whole thing would break even, according to the artist's logic, and it also did – to the last cent. To run the whole thing another consistent lap, Wolgers received his verdict from the Stockholm District Court and immediately sold the unopened envelope to his gallery in Norway. Thus he had pointed out the artist's role in an unequal economy in a creative manner. Again; "Is it possible to do so?" "Yes, it really is."

If I may return to that interview that I started off with, Dan Wolgers then described that he placed himself in the ditch between painting and sculpture already as a student. In this way he got to belong to neither one nor the other, but has obviously benefited from the traditional battle between painting and sculpture. The battle, he explained, sharpens the vision and the arguments of both sides - and thought it would be nice if there were anything left of it even among younger artists. No, Wolgers will not really agree with the two-dimensionality in the painting, but seems to have a special relationship with other artists' paintings and in particular to the physical handling of these. The wonderful feeling of wearing, lifting, lugging and feeling the weight of the paintings (which Wolgers in particular made when he worked at the

Museum of Modern Art), is an experience that he wanted to share as a kind of service to the viewer. Ahead of an exhibition at the National Museum in 1999 he had some of his favorite works from the museum's collections as well as from the Museum of Modern Art weighted - Piet Mondrian, Jan Bruegel, Roy Lichtenstein and a few others. Then he made a kind of dummy with the same weight and dimensions - white rectangular wooden boards with holes in them. Once in place in the exhibition the dummies were easily unhooked from their positions and the visitor got to experience what it feels like to lift and carry a real masterpiece. And at the same time, the artist in "the ditch" had managed to make sculpture out of painting. For the last time in this text, but many times in the future;" Is it possible to do so? " " Yes, it really is." ~



Låda (Box), 1981



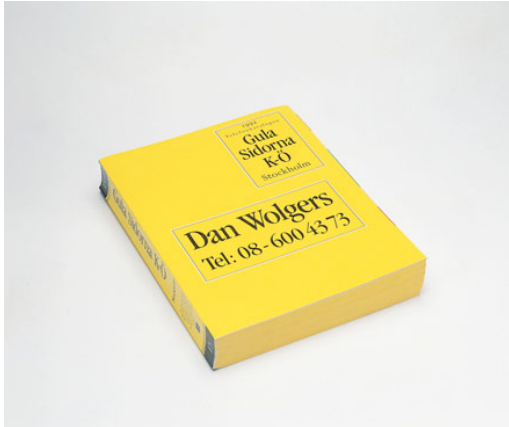
Souvenir, 1988



Utan Titel (Untitled), 1984



Utan Titel (Untitled), 1997



Telefonkatalogen (The Phone Book), 1991



Kristus predikar från båten (Christ preaching from the boat), 1999



Flasktorkare (Bottle Rack), 1999



Utan Titel (Untitled), 1988

Expressen November, 20 2008



Dan Wolgers / Galleri Lars Bohman

Spridda över golvet på Galleri Lars Bohman ligger några klotformiga föremål som först liknar stenar eller stora höstliga frukter. Dan Wolgers kallar dem Torso (Självporträtt).

Han har utgått från formen på sin egen skalle, huvudets överdel till och med ögonbrynet och halva ögat. Den har han dubblerat och sedan gjutit samman de två halvorna i brunpatinerad brons. I den anatomiska ommöbleringen framträder kvinnan i mannen, då de hopfogade ögonhalvorna kan uppfattas som ett kvinnokön, en metafor. Det är ett dubbelseende, ett drömmeri om tecken och kropp som är släkt med Dali, Magritte, eller Bellmer som metodiskt utforskade det fysiskt omedvetna där kroppens delar och öppningar obekymrat kunde byta plats; samma slags omflyttningar som i ett anagram.

Den klotformiga torson är androgyn. Den drömmen finns redan i Platons dialog Gästabudet: i begynnelsen var människan klotformig och androgyn, innan gudarna klöv henne i två hälfter och två separata kön. Om passagen hos Platon kan ha givit Dan Wolgers impulser till Torso vet jag inte; däremot vet jag att han ofta intresserat sig för skallens sfäriska form, för paradoxer och spirituella metaforer. Och här ger han sin ekvation en övertygande skulptural form som ger kropp åt det poetiska språkets och könets mysterium.

Peter Cornell

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Scattered across the floor at Galleri Lars Bohman is a few globular objects that at first sight resembles stones or large autumnal fruits. Dan Wolgers calls them *Torso (Self Portrait)*.

He began with the shape of his own head, from the top of the head to the eyebrow and half of the eye. He doubled that part of the face and molded the two halves together in brown patina bronze.

In the anatomical reshuffling the woman appears in the man, as the assembled eyes halves can be perceived as the female sex, a metaphor. It is a double vision, a reverie about signs and body that are related to Dali, Magritte, or Bellmer who methodically explored the physical unconsciousness where the body's parts and openings unconcernedly could trade places; same kind of displacement as in an anagram.

The globular torso is androgynous. That dream exists already in Plato's dialogue *Symposium*: In the beginning, human was shaped as a globe and androgynous, before the Gods split her into two halves and two separate gender. If the Plato's passage may have given Dan Wolgers impulses for the torso I know not; however, I know that he often has taken an interest in the spherical shape of skulls, in paradoxes and in witty metaphors. And here he gives his equation a compelling sculptural form that gives body to the poetic language and the mystery of sex.

Peter Cornell

Dan Wolgers

by George Negroponte

BOMB 108/Summer 2009, ARTISTS ON ARTISTS

(Photography, Installation, Artists on Artists)

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Daydreamer, 2006, bronze. All images courtesy of the artist.

Dan Wolgers is in his third decade of delivering snapshots of the improbable, a kind of shock therapy, to his native Sweden. His tough-minded and synthetic sensibility is fundamentally a conceptual practice but with something else thrown in at all times: it is exceedingly visual and jam-packed with humanity. Wolgers has vandalized, borrowed, intruded upon, carved into, joked about, and quoted anything and everything he can get his hands on. Driven by indignation and fueled by poetry, Wolgers's has not been an ordinary voyage—imagine a very gifted craft artist turned ideologue.



Untitled (The artist's car blocking the showcase of Moderna Museet at the Stockholm Art Fair), 1992, installation view.

His work has covered some distance. Early on, in the late 1970s, Wolgers made small objects of wood or metal that were mechanically rigged to misbehave or function without a machine's standardized rigor. Often they backfired. Sometimes they talked back and even kidded around. By 1989, Wolgers was making large installations with sound and photographs. In the early 1990s, sensationalist stunts took over for a period of time, embroiling Wolgers in both infamy and litigation.

In 1991, he commissioned an advertising agency to make the work for his exhibition in Stockholm and attended the opening completely unaware of its shape, size, or content. The critics raged and so did the public. In 1992, when The Friends of Moderna Museet invited Wolgers to showcase his work at the Stockholm Art Fair, he parked his car (a Volvo, of course) neatly in the space the museum allotted him for the show. Later that same year, when asked to participate in a show titled *Ecco Homo* at Liljevalchs, he walked off with two of the gallery's benches and auctioned them before the opening. A lone plaque with Wolgers's name represented him for the duration of the exhibition. Two outraged Swedish citizens sued Wolgers for misappropriation and won the case. Wolgers promptly sold the notification of his verdict to a collector.



Untitled (Polaroid camera twice natural size), 1980, enamel paint on wood.

In the current decade, Wolgers has been grappling with more conventional sculptural problems. His recent bronzes are head-sized forms that sit quietly on the floor. Their smoothness resembles female genitalia but their dark patina and tone of these objects gives them an overall fuzziness. Allusion has played a significant role throughout Wolgers's work: sometimes it's played down, at other times it's abrasively in-your-face. He builds difference upon difference and then inventively fits them together in an essential and dynamic marriage. His objects can be both hermetic and eminently explicit.



Torso, 2008, bronze.

Because Wolgers's many modes have been cultivated in a fairly public manner over many years, every move he makes is watched. He carries baggage in Europe, where his work is pressured by its own self-inflicted commentary, but the ploys of Wolgers's youth are gradually receding; he is an artist shifting gears. His preoccupation with mass meaning could be turning inside out, purged by a therapeutic desire to reclaim the object. This is a defining moment for Wolgers. The stamp of an extraordinary sculptor's touch has always been deeply embedded in everything he has done. These days, weight, form, and mass seep into one's consciousness when looking at his work. Years of play have been boiled down to the basics. A new inwardness is unfolding for this artist, all of it derived from his prolonged search for a meaning fixed deeply in his own rich imagination.

—George Negroponte is an artist currently living and working in Sweden. He is represented by the Jason McCoy Gallery in New York. Negroponte was president of the Drawing Center from 2002 to 2007.

The Artists on Artists Series is sponsored by the W.L. Lyons Brown, Jr. Charitable Foundation and the New York State Council on the Arts.

Konsten.net, 25 September, 2011



Dan Wolgers at Galleri Riis

It is odd how images sometimes are released and act as twins or doppelgangers to other images. How the subject of a work of art can merge together with the orbit of another. How the contemplation of an image evokes the memory of others. Such an unexpected encounter occur when I see Dan Wolgers exhibition at Galleri Riis, where he shows new photogravures and sculptures. Some engravings represent old-fashioned mirrors with thick ornate frames and I'm reminded of images I've seen by the American artist Zoe Leonard. She has photographed similar mirrors from the Metropolitan Museum in New York, hanging on the museum wall onto medallion patterned wallpaper. Wolgers has found his mirrors online, had them transferred onto light sensitive plates and during the printing process worked with the area around the mirror in the image. There are obvious signs of unevenly wiped off paint, giving the picture a dense and fateful atmosphere, but as in Leonard's mirrors some of them doesn't reflect anything. Inside the void of the glass there's only a spherical light. Like a gas.

There somewhere, in this emptiness, one can find a parallel to Leonard. In the emptied image – which is filled with a white glow – lies a common outlook and a shared interest in the disconnected. For what's almost visible? Others of Wolgers' engravings shows binoculars and globes, objects in images with dazzling surfaces, either with beams of light or light that has gone out completely. The works seem to revolve around the quantifiable and the metered, around what is explicit and what is forgotten. And about the space between. What is most peculiar about Wolgers' images and objects is that they actually visualize this hidden space.



This appears particularly significant in a round reflective shape that recurs in a couple of sculptures. Like the engravings, they are assembled of found material, Wolgers long-established technique and method. "Roterande spegel" (Rotating Mirror) is precisely what the title indicates, where the mirror disk with the help of a small crank can make a jerky motion. Without any other function and its ability to reflect deleted, it stands upright like an abstract sign under a bell jar. "Spegelklot" (Mirror Ball) captures a somehow reversed reflection of a bronze globe through a framed mirror. The mirror is indeed in front of the globe and cover it partially, but seems to still render the globe in an inverted image. The dark globe is transformed in the mirror - with an almost magnetic intensity - into a shiny surface. As if the encounter with the mirror refines. The globe's visual connection to the engravings establish invisible bonds in the room and turns it into their three-dimensional twin.

Address: Rödbotorget 2, Stockholm. The exhibition will run from 1/9 - 9/10
Magnus Bons (text), Galleri Riis (photographs)

Dan Wolgers på Galleri Riis

Det är underligt hur bilder ibland frigörs och uppträder som andra bilders tvillingar eller dubbelgångare. Hur motivet från ett konstverk kan löpa samman med omloppsbanan i ett annat. Hur betraktandet av en bild väcker minnet av andra. Ett sådant oväntat möte äger rum när jag ser Dan Wolgers utställning i Galleri Riis, där han visar nya fotografvyer och skulpturer. Några gravyrer föreställer ålderdomliga speglar med tjocka utsirade ramar och jag påminns direkt om bilder jag sett av den amerikanska konstnären Zoe Leonard. Hon har fotograferat liknande speglar från Metropolitan Museum i New York, hängande på museiväggens stormönstrade medaljongtapeter. Wolgers har plockat sina från nätet, låtit överföra dem till fotokänslig plåt och under tryckningen arbetat med området i bilden runt spegeln. Där finns tydliga spår av ojämnt avtorkad färg, vilket ger bilden en tät och ödesmättad atmosfär, men i likhet med Leonards reflekterar några av speglarna ingenting. I glasets tomrum finns endast ett sfäriskt ljus. Som en gas.

Där någonstans ligger parallellen till Leonard, någonstans i tomheten. I den tömda bilden – som samtidigt fylls av ett vitt sken – döljer sig en gemensam blick och ett delat intresse för det frånvända. För det nästan synliga? Andra av Wolgers gravyrer föreställer kikare och jordglober, objekt med bländande bildytor som antingen strålar av ljus eller som slocknat helt. Verken tycks kretsa kring det mätbara och det utmätta, kring det som går att överblicka och det som fallit i glömska. Och kring utrymmet mellan. Det märkligaste med Wolgers långsamt verkande bilder och objekt är att de faktiskt synliggör denna dolda plats.

Särskilt påtagligt blir det genom en rund speglande form som återkommer i ett par av skulpturerna. Liksom gravyrerna är de hopsatta av funnet material, Wolgers sedan länge etablerade teknik och konstnärliga metod. "Roterande spegel" är just det som titeln anger, där spegelskivan med hjälp av en liten vev kan fås att göra en knyckande rörelse. Utan annan funktion och med sin förmåga till reflektion liksom raderad, står den upprätt som ett abstrakt tecken under en glaskupa. I "Spegelklot" uppfångas en liksom bakvänd återglans av ett bronsklot tvärsigenom en inramad spegel. Spegeln står visserligen framför klotet och täcker det delvis, men tycks ändå återge klotet i en inverterad avbildning. Den mörka kulan förändras i spegeln – med en närmast magnetisk intensitet – till en glänsande yta. Som om mötet med spegellinsen förädlar. Klotets visuella överensstämmelse med gravyrerna upprättar osynliga band i rummet och gör det till deras tredimensionella tvilling.

Adress: Rödbotorget 2, Stockholm. Utställningen pågår under perioden 1/9 – 9/10
Magnus Bons (text), Galleri Riis (foto)

Konsten.net, 12 april, 2013

Från texten: "Kristina Matousch och Dan Wolgers på Galleri Riis"

"Även Dan Wolgers har ett gott förhållande till kroppen, men i hans fall omgärdas verken av en kulturhistorisk aura som lägger en extra dimension till dem. Antikens mytologi, berättelser – allt går att använda och kläs i en väl patinerad skrud. Wolgers har en djup kärlek till det nötta och slitna, oberoende av om det är objekt eller idéer vi talar om. Denna gång har han i vanlig ordning konstruerat ett slags mekaniska skulpturer som egentligen utför otroligt banala rörelser (nedre bilden). För det mesta handlar det om oändliga loopar som varken har en början eller ett slut. Som så ofta hos Wolgers är det en ganska pessimistisk syn på tillvaron som exponeras, men med glimten i ögat. Den existentiella förtvivlan går det att le åt, kanske är det så man måste hantera den? Snäckskal, pärlkedjor och glas blandas med gamla spikar och nötta plankor. P-O Ultvedt möter Katarina Norling genom Dan Wolgers eftertänksamma handlag. Det är inga banbrytande utsvävningar Wolgers bjuder på. Men det är tryggt att möta en konstnär som vet vad han gör och som håller stadigt i sina verktyg."

*Adress: Rödbotorget 2, Stockholm Utställningen pågår under perioden 4/4 – 12/5
Anders Olofsson (text och foto)*

From the text: "Kristina Matousch och Dan Wolgers på Galleri Riis"

"Also Dan Wolgers have a good relationship with the body, but in his case the works are surrounded by a cultural aura that adds an extra dimension to them. Ancient mythology, stories – all can be used, and dressed in a well patinated garb. Wolgers have a deep love for the worn and threadbare, regardless of whether there are objects or ideas we are talking about. This time, he has, as usual, constructed a kind of mechanical sculptures that actually performs incredibly banal movements (bottom picture). For the most part it's about infinite loops which has neither a beginning or an end. As so often in Wolgers is a rather pessimistic view of life exposed, but with a twinkle in his eye. The existential despair, you can smile about, maybe it's so you have to manage it? Seashell, pearl chains and glass mixed with old nails and worn planks. P-O Ultvedt meets Katarina Norling by Dan Wolgers thoughtful touch. There is no groundbreaking debauchery Wolgers bidding on. But it is reassuring to meet an artist who knows what he is doing and who is holding steadily in his tools."

*Address: Rödbotorget 2, Stockholm Stockholm The exhibition runs from 4 /4 - 12/5
Anders Olofsson (text and photos)*



NATTFISKARE (NIGHT FISHERMEN) BY BJÖRN SPRINGFELDT

Few artists I know, or even know of, have such an interchange as Dan Wolgers in his works when it comes to the relation between the moderation of the materials and the number of issues and journeys in feelings and thoughts. Few artists I know also have the necessary disrespect and Dan Wolgers' ability to identify a cluster of problems and invent creative points of attack.

Anyone who wants to immerse themselves in this, I advise reading the philosopher Nils-Eric Sahlin's high-octane book *The Complexity of Creativity*, in which Dan Wolgers is mentioned in the same breath as Epaminondas and Monteverdi, while for instance Odd Nerdrum ends up on the compost.

Dan Wolgers public artistry also began with a large gesture. When he was still a student at the Academy of Fine Arts in Stockholm, he did a couple of shows in the old, now long since demolished, gazebo in the garden of Moderna Museet. In the first, a number of balls rolled across the floor and when they met resistance, they rummaged for a while, and then found a new direction for their journey. On one wall a fabric red coat closet in the was installed. If you unwittingly stepped on a pedal, it transformed under the deafening roar from its relaxed state to a violent erection, forcing the viewer to flight. It filled the room, without any consideration.

In the second exhibition a number of paper rolls hung on the walls, which in invisibly and in different rates were flushed out and after months formed various large piles on the floor, while some still reached for contact with the floor.

The space and the time. Can a larger home range of artistic exploration be claimed? And the art's power to bring the viewer in motion be more clearly demonstrated?

Dan Wolgers went on to find objects in the abundance that surrounds us and altering them a slightly, making small additions, which detaches them from the habitual vision and throws us headlong into the unknown. They make us often burst into laughter, though perhaps we should rather fall into tears. In that way many for long misjudged Dan Wolgers as a simple prankster, not least for the element of humor that is always present in his work.

True humor has nothing to do with guffaw but is a reaction to the world of absurdism and a force of resistance, strong enough to pitfall dictators. Too many people allow themselves to be led and carried away by the pretentious claim of the portentous, but this is an effective medium, which weigh especially the political and religious spheres, and far from the humor, which allows us to live up in front of Dan Wolgers' works.

Now Dan Wolgers driving force is not primarily to amuse the viewer, but to get the thought to rush. Like when the Technical Museum asked for a contribution to an exhibition about the digital revolution and he praised the One, the O and the enlightenment by making a lamp. Complete with plug, bulb, cable, and power button – not only one, but a hundred.

The king would inaugurate and the artist offered his majesty, that the action would be confirmed by him turning out the light, it was easy with the technical help to prepare so that all power switches was on and the lamp was lit. The court did announce that the King was willing to turn on a light, but not shut it down.

Too bad you did not let the King get what he wanted. He had been standing there still today pressing buttons. The mathematician Olof Bergvall has said that the chance to light the lamp is 1 to 1 followed by 30 zeros. Or as he puts it educational for us non-mathematicians: the sun's weight in kilograms. Or like that in around 10 billion years, from the earth genesis to its likely extinction, grow hay on the entire surface and put everything in a single stack and hiding a needle in it...

The artist's role in society is, no matter what exhibition speeches would suggest, marginal and this waste of creative energy put Dan Wolgers to a head when he had his own name and number on the cover of the professional portion of the Stockholm telephone directories. How would society look like if the artist's services were requested at the same rate as the hairdresser, plumber or car repair?

At the same time Dan Wolgers' elevated the phone book, this manual for anyone to speak with anyone, to a work of art and a copy ended up logically at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Registered under the artist name *Don Wolgers* (!).

Often before this Wolgers' works you are forced into moral philosophy and ethics far, and for most of us sadly unexplored, field. Like when he was invited to an exhibition at Liljevalchs Konsthall and performed an art political symbolic act, to look to it that he received no remuneration for participation. The artist took away a couple of benches and arranged so that they were sold at auction. Meanwhile Liljevalchs took – without one party knew what the other was doing – Dan Wolgers' covers for telephone book and did it in a modified version as the exhibition catalogue cover. Dan Wolgers was convicted in the District Court for his prank and got on black and white that inert matter is more valuable than intellectual energy. The fine was paid by selling the district court's ruling – in an unopened envelope – and thus put art above the law. Or... If you continue to think about where this and other works by Dan Wolgers leads, you feel light as a needle in the haystack...

A feeling that even stronger affects one before a work, which is at the same time the smallest and largest that Dan Wolgers has done. The material call-up was seven rolls of white sewing thread, the title *Initu Gud (The Inside of God)*. He was assigned by the Storkyrkan (The church in the old city) in Stockholm to perform the work. Somehow, he got up on the church attic, crawled out above of the vault dome and opened a hole in the top of these. Through the hole he lowered down a thread to a point just above a man's height. Invisible to most people below, but still there...

The myths surrounding the artist and the artwork are numerous and often stands in the way of the viewer. So many believe, that the artwork carry a hidden message that we can share if we get into the work. It is probably the case that good art, like good poetry, sets processes in emotional life and thinking, wandering hither and thither, and extend the unexpected energies on the road. This refusal to let the artwork be reduced to a placard was manifested by Dan Wolgers in one of his legendary works in the Moderna Museet Collection: the toolbox with a switch, which when turned on immediately opens the lid and – shuts down...

Through the notoriety Dan Wolgers achieved he was appointed to be a professor – in sculpture – at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Stockholm, which triggered a landslide among traditionalists among artists. The artist's countermove was to publish a full page in Svenska Dagbladet (the Swedish morning paper) with two photographs of himself with his eyes crossed. He looks totally speeded out. But if you imitate the picture of the artist and when looking at it, you suddenly see full three-dimensional of Dan Wolgers on the newspaper page. Not a bad show of sculptural skills.

In several works Dan Wolgers presents the skull. This beautifully shaped bowl, with its meandering seams, it enclose the gray gelatinous mass, which constitutes around 2 % of body weight but consumes 20% of its energy – and our persona. In human history, we have sought the answers to all the questions that are boiled down here, about the self and our relationship to the world. Today, brain research down to the molecular level, but the philosophical questions are largely unanswered. In front of the Fotografiska (the photographic museum) in Stockholm – a fitting place – a giant sculpture in bronze and a synthesis of Dan Wolgers own skull is placed. During the working process, he double-exposed the eye and the anus, but stopped before the realization of the idea that the eye would cry when it rains. Otherwise a wonderful metaphor for impression and expression...

We want so much to imagine that we are rational and in this and many other of his works Dan Wolgers acknowledges and writes us at the nose that it is on the contrary our drives that steers us. As in the dreamy “bloated proportions”, where a male value perspective is saying how it is.

Wisława Szymborska has pointed out, that the politician cries: I know, I know, I know, while the poet whispers: I do not know, I do not know, I do not know. The scientist, poet and artist share driving force in the wonder of the world, but give it different orientations. Scientific advances can sometimes, through the technical level, alienate those with the absence of keys, while the poet and the artist creates concreteness and keeps our wonderment alive.

Dan Wolgers is a poet not only in images but also in the language which is cross lightened in the wonderful series *Grand Anti – 15 scenes from the life of Jesus*. To regard these works, led by the hand of the artist’s verbal description, is a moving experience and leaves one in mute admiration for this creative and transformative vision.

Also, the enigmatic series *Nattfiske (Night Fishing I, II, III, IV, V, VI)*, shows this linguistic side as Dan Wolgers got tired of the Roman numerals in the work plan and therefore, the night before the opening, wrote haiku poems instead. *Grand Anti* like *Night Fishing* can surely be found in the library.

Man is born as an individual and becomes human by absorbing experiences from our collective memory and operations. It is in this field of tension, that art is acting and offers its gifts to anyone.

But the artwork also requires something of the viewer. Nothing is free in this life. You must personally make an effort. To open myself before the artwork, to free myself from the constraints I carry with me to the meeting and switch on all sensitivity and intellectual ability. Dan Wolgers himself advises us not to try to understand. Then “other opportunities than to only milk the work are offered”. The last bit, nobody can lead us by the hand. Where the public road ends and the artist’s face is necessarily turned away.

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NATTFISKARE AV BJÖRN SPRINGFELDT

Få konstnärer jag känner, eller ens känner till, har en sådan utväxling som Dan Wolgers i sina verk i förhållandet mellan måttfullheten i det materiella uppbådet och det antal frågor och resor i känsla och tanke, som verken ger upphov till. Få konstnärer jag känner till har också den nödvändiga respektlösheten och Dan Wolgers förmåga att identifiera ett problemkomplex och uppfinna kreativa angreppspunkter.

Den som vill fördjupa sig i detta råder jag att läsa filosofen Nils-Eric Sahlins högoktaniga bok, *Kreativitetens filosofi*, i vilken Dan Wolgers nämns i samma andetag som Epaminondas och Monteverdi, medan t.ex. Odd Nerdrum hamnar på komposten.

Dan Wolgers publika konstnärskap började också med ett stort anslag. När han ännu var elev på Konsthögskolan i Stockholm gjorde han ett par utställningar i det gamla, nu sedan länge rivna, lusthuset i Moderna Museets trädgård. I den första for ett antal klot fram på golvet och då de mötte motstånd, böjde de ett tag, för att sedan hitta en ny riktning för sin färd. På en vägg hängde en röd klädgarderob i tyg. Om man aningslöst trampade på en pedal, lämnade den under öronbedövande dån sitt slaka tillstånd för en våldsam erektion, som tvingade betraktaren på flykten. Den tog plats, helt utan hänsyn.

I den andra utställningen hängde på väggarna ett antal pappersrullar, som i osynligt arbete och olika takt spolades ut och efter månader bildade olika stora högar på golvet, medan någon ännu fiskade efter markkontakt.

Rummet och tiden. Kan ett större revir för konstnärligt utforskande mutas in? Och konstens kraft att få betraktaren i rörelse tydligare demonstreras?

Dan Wolgers fortsatte med att finna objekt i det överflöd som omger oss och vrida till dem en aning, göra ett litet tillägg, som bryter loss dem ur vaneseendet och kastar oss huvudstupa ut i det okända. De får oss ofta att brista i skratt, fast vi kanske hellre borde falla i gråt. Så missbedömde många länge Dan Wolgers som en enklare upptågsmakare, inte minst för det element av humor som alltid finns i hans verk.

Sann humor har inget med gapflabbet att göra utan är en reaktion på världens absurdism och en motståndets kraft, stark nog att fälla diktatorer. Alltför många låter sig förledas och ryckas med av gravallvarets pretentiösa anspråk, men detta är ett verknytningsmedel, som tynger inte minst den politiska och religiösa sfären och långt från den humor, som får oss att leva upp inför Dan Wolgers verk.

Nu är Dan Wolgers drivkraft inte främst att roa betraktaren utan att få tanken att rusa. Som när Tekniska Museet bad om ett bidrag till en utställning om den digitala revolutionen och han hyllade ettan, nollan och upplysningen genom att tillverka en lampa. Komplet med stickpropp, glödlampa, kabel och strömbrytare – men inte en utan hundra.

Kungen skulle inviga och konstnären erbjöd majestätet, att handlingen skulle bekräftas av att han släckte lampan, som man ju lätt med teknisk apparatur kunde preparera så att alla strömbrytare var på och lampan lyste. Hovet lät meddela, att kungen kunde tänka sig att tända en lampa, men inte släcka en.

Synd att man inte lät kungen få som han ville. Han hade nog fått stå där och trycka än idag. Matematikern Olof Bergvall har berättat att chansen att tända lampan är som 1 följt av 30 nollor. Eller som han pedagogiskt uttrycker det för oss icke-matematiker: som solens vikt i kilo. Eller som att vi under runt 10 miljarder år, från jordens uppkomst till dess troliga förintelse, odlar hö på hela ytan och lägger allt i en enda stack och gömmer en nål i den...

Konstnärens roll i samhället är, oavsett vad festtalen vill påstå, marginell och detta slöseri med kreativ energi satte Dan Wolgers på sin spets, när han lät trycka sitt eget namn och nummer på omslaget till yrkesdelen av Stockholms telefonkataloger. Hur skulle samhället se ut, om konstnärens tjänster efterfrågades i samma grad som frisörens, rörmokarens eller bilverkstadens?

Samtidigt upphöjde Dan Wolgers telefonkatalogen, denna manual för att vem som helst skall kunna tala med vem som helst, till ett konstverk och ett exemplar hamnade följdriktigt på Museum of Modern Art i New York. Registrerat under konstnärsnamnet Don Wolgers.

Ofta inför denne Wolgers verk tvingas man ut på moralfilosofins och etikens vida och för de flesta av oss sorgligt utforskade fält. Som när han inbjuden till en utställning på Liljevalchs Konsthall utförde en konstpolitisk symbolhandling, för att själv se till, att han fick någon ersättning för sin medverkan. Konstnären förde bort ett par bänkar och arrangerade så att de såldes på auktion.

Samtidigt norpade konsthallen – utan att någon part visste vad den andra hade för sig – Dan Wolgers omslag till telefonkatalogen och gjorde det i modifierad form till utställningskatalogens omslag. Dan Wolgers fälldes i tingsrätten för sitt tilltag

och fick svart på vitt att trög materia är värdefullare än immateriell energi. Bötesbeloppet betalades genom att Dan Wolgers sålde tingsrättens dom – i öppnat kuvert – och på så sätt satte konsten över lagen. Eller... Fortsätter man att fundera över vart detta och andra av Dan Wolgers verk leder, känner man sig lätt som nålen i höstacken...

En känsla, som ännu starkare drabbar en inför det verk, som samtidigt är det minsta och största Dan Wolgers gjort. Det materiella uppbådet var sju rullar vit sytråd, verkets titel *Inuti Gud*. Han hade av Storkyrkan i Stockholm fått uppdraget att utföra ett verk. På något sätt tog han sig upp på kyrkvinden, kravlade sig ut på valvkupolernas översida och öppnade ett hål i toppen på dessa. Genom hålet sänkte han ner en sytråd till en punkt precis ovan manshöjd.

Osynligt för de allra flesta fanns det där...

Myterna kring Konstnären och Konstverket är många och står ofta i vägen för betraktaren. Så tror många, att konstverket bär på ett dolt meddelande, som vi kan ta del av om vi tar oss in i verket. Det är nog i stället så att bra konst, likt bra poesi, sätter igång processer i känsloliv och tänkande, som irrar hit och dit och faller ut oväntade energier på vägen.

Denna vägran att låta konstverket reduceras till löpsedel, visade Dan Wolgers i ett av sina legendariska verk, i Moderna Museets samlingar: verktygslådan med strömbrytare, som när den slås på omedelbart öppnar locket och – slår av...

Genom den ryktbarhet Dan Wolgers uppnådde kallades han till professor – i skulptur – vid Konsthögskolan i Stockholm, vilket utlöste ett jordskred bland traditionalister i konstnärskåren. Konstnärens motdrag blev då att på en helsida i SvD publicera två fotografier av sig själv med ögonen i kors. Han ser helt speedad ut. Men om man själv imiterar konstnären och vindar när man tittar på bilden, hoppar Dan Wolgers plötsligt helt tredimensionell fram ur tidningssidan. Ingen dålig uppvisning av skulptural förmåga.

I flera verk ställer Dan Wolgers fram skallen. Denna vackert formade skål, med sina meandrande sömmar, innesluter den grå geléartade massa, som utgör runt 2% av kroppsvikten, men förbrukar 20% av energin – och är vårt jag. Under människans historia har vi sökt svar på alla de frågor som kokar ner här, om jaget och vårt förhållande till världen. Idag är hjärnforskningen nere på molekylär nivå, men de filosofiska frågorna är i stort obesvarade. Så ligger utanför Fotografiska Museet i Stockholm – en passande plats – en jätteskulptur i brons och en syntes av Dan Wolgers egen skalle. Under arbetsprocessen dubbelexponerade konstnären öga och anus, men hejdade sig inför förverkligandet av tanken, att ögat skulle gråta när det regnar. En annars underbar metafor för intryck och uttryck...

Vi vill så gärna föreställa oss, att vi är rationella och i detta och många andra av sina verk erkänner Dan Wolgers och skriver oss på näsan om hur tvärtom våra drifter styr. Så i den drömska "upplåsta proportioner", där ett manligt värdeperspektiv säger hur det är.

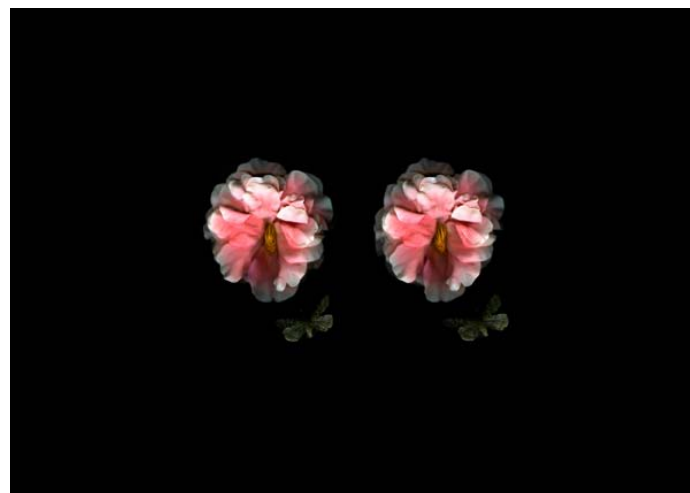
Wisława Szymborska har pekat på, att politikern ropar: jag vet, jag vet, jag vet, medan poeten viskar: jag vet inte, jag vet inte, jag vet inte. Forskaren, poeten och konstnären delar drivkraft i förundran inför världen, men ger den olika inriktningar. Inför forskningens landvinningar kan vi idag genom den tekniska nivån alieneras i brist på nycklar, medan poeten och konstnären skapar konkretion och håller vår förundran vid liv.

Att Dan Wolgers är poet inte bara i bild utan också i språk får sin korsbelysning i det underbara verket *Grand Anti – 15 scener ur Jesu liv*. Att betrakta dessa verk, ledd vid handen av konstnärens verbala beskrivning, är en gripande upplevelse och lämnar en i stum beundran inför detta skapande och omvandlande seende.

Också den gåtfulla serien *Nattfiskare I, II, III, IV, V, VI* o.s.v. visar denna språkliga sida då Dan Wolgers tröttnade på de romerska siffrorna i verkförteckningen och därför, natten före vernissagen, skrev haikuer i stället. *Grand Anti* liksom *Nattfiskare* går säkert att få fram på biblioteket.

Människan föds som individ och blir människa genom att suga upp erfarenheter ur vårt kollektiva minne och verksamheter. Det är i detta spänningsfält, som konsten agerar och erbjuder sina gåvor till vem som helst.

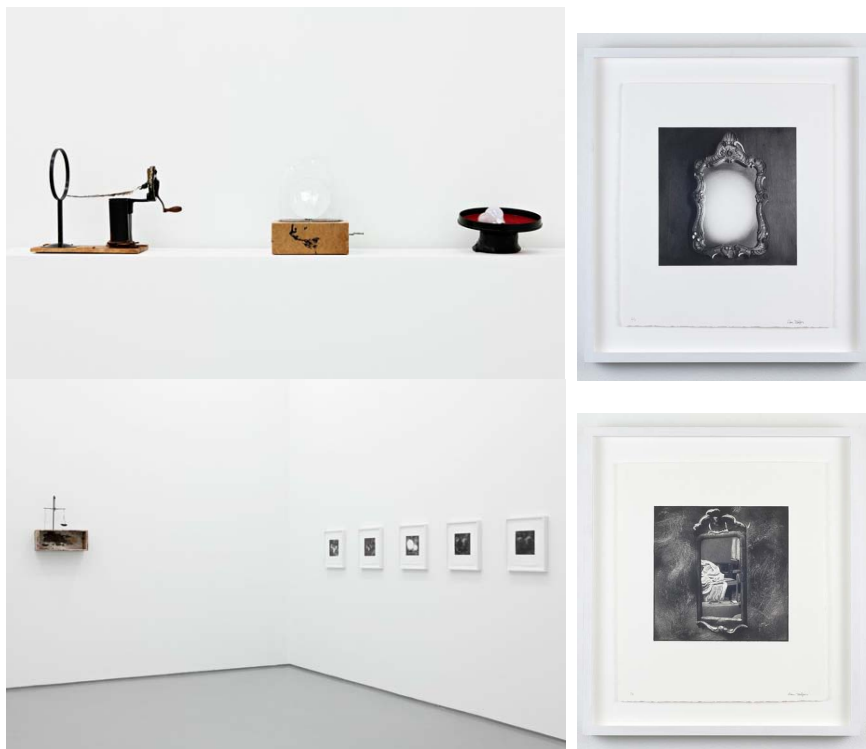
Men konstverket kräver också något av betraktaren. Ingenting är riktigt gratis här i livet. Man måste själv göra en ansträngning. Inför konstverket att öppna sig, göra sig fri från de begränsningar jag bär med mig till mötet och koppla på all känslighet och intellektuell förmåga. Själv råder Dan Wolgers oss att inte försöka förstå. Då "erbjuds andra möjligheter att mjölka verket". Sista biten kan ingen leda oss vid handen. Där slutar allmän väg och konstnärens ansikte är av nödvändighet bortvänt.



Dan Wolgers, Galleri Riis, Stockholm, April 4 – May 12, 2013

(From the Press release)

In 1981 Dan Wolgers made the work *Låda* – his old toolbox that after a push of a button buzzingly opens its lid ajar only to quickly and evasively shut itself, refusing to reveal its content. Frustrated by the lack of satisfaction, the viewer is forced to reflect on his own actions and the transience in the promised - which in itself give satisfaction (and will urge pressing the button over and over again). Ever since, Wolgers has by his own account, used the same tools and the same trials in his research of the social machinery and of the human existence. His process is characterized by speech and thought, by turning and twisting all artistic syllables and meanings, airing all possible and impossible nooks and crannies. In the exhibition Wolgers presents a series of original three-dimensional images that with their bodily theme corresponds with a suite of mobile sculptures. The initially two-dimensional images receive depth and space when viewed cross-eyed. Alongside are the mobiles, that when set in motion by the viewer, animate the air, chime and rattle. With the title *De Profundis* or *The First Meeting*, they are all dedicated to sexuality, the erotic and the reproduction.



Dan Wolgers, *Hidden From View*, Galleri Riis, Stockholm March 8 – April 22, 2012

(From the Press Release)

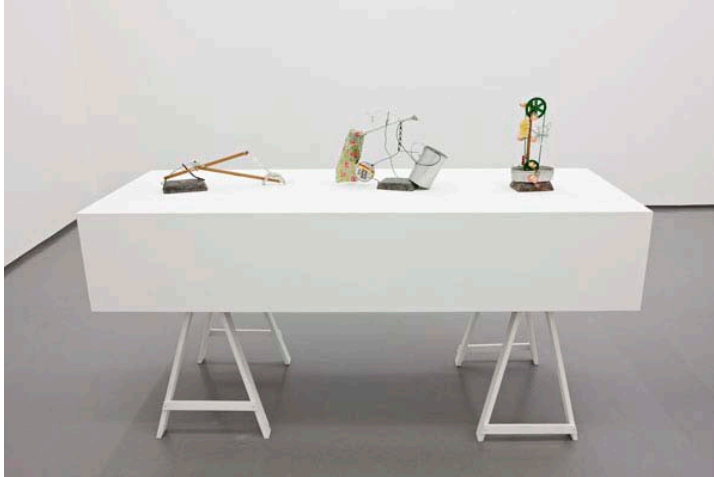
Galleri Riis has the pleasure of presenting our eighth show with the Swedish artist Dan Wolgers (born 1955). Wolgers is one of Scandinavia's most influential – and talked about – artists in his generation. Through almost 30 years of practice, and within his unique poetic conceptualism, through wit, surprise, provocation and obstinate challenges, his art has evoked feelings and created debates, most specifically in the Swedish art scene. But it has never been about pranks or being insincere; Irony is far from the case, rather the work is marked by a childlike questioning shaped by a wise man. Wolgers has brought matters to excess, penetrated the absurd, and repeatedly revealed the melancholy hidden behind laughter. His works and exhibitions may just as well linger on one or several aspects of basic human needs and yearnings – physical or metaphysical – as discussing the challenges of artistic output. With the development of his artistic practice, his audience has broadened.

This exhibition "Hidden from view" is a version of the exhibition in Galleri Riis Stockholm in September 2011, and consists of a series of 13 graphic prints and a small number of objects. The works hold a familiar tender sadness, added is a new sombre obscurity; hidden from view. The prints' motifs vary between depictions of isolated objects and views of mysterious rooms seen through mirrors. Inside the mirrors one can imagine or possibly conjure traces of human activity. The sense of something out of reach beyond the surface, unfolds as awareness rises about the inaccessibility in their depth - looking in you are in the mirrored room depicted. Contributing to the dense mystical expression, is the fact that the motifs used are snapshots from the webpages of an auction house for antiques, digitally and manually worked and printed in the classic graphic technique photogravure. The sculptures present in the exhibition reflect the atmosphere of the prints in their scarce form. Some are mobile and are driven by a winch, others are static – all of them somewhat glum. Like the rotating bird feather which – despite endless rotation – never will caress the inaccessible circle. All that the feather will ever be able to touch, is the air between itself and the desired circle's inner wall. About the exhibition, Wolgers says, "Yearning is the privilege of man, possibly also grieving".

Dan Wolgers lives and works in Stockholm and in Gotland, Sweden. He was educated at the Royal College of Art from 1980-85, where he later, in the years 1995-98, served as a professor. He is represented in major museum collections throughout the Nordic countries and has completed several public commissions.



Public Commission in front of the Fotografiska in Stockholm. *Torso*, Bronze, 2010.



Dan Wolgers, *STUDIE*, Galleri Riis, Oslo, February 4 – March 7, 2010

(From the Press Release)

Galleri Riis has the pleasure of presenting our 6th exhibition with the Swedish artist Dan Wolgers. Dan Wolgers (b. 1955) is one of Scandinavia's most recognised artists. He works within a poetic conceptual expression, frequently posing elementary questions treated with a peculiar mixture of playful intelligence, seriousness, absurdity and humour. With the works in the present exhibition, he approaches the method and expression from earlier phases in his artistic career, in which readymade/found objects are juxtaposed and movement is added.

Under the collective title "Studier" (Studies), Wolgers shows in this exhibition a new series of seven sculptures. They were made during an intensive working phase in Gotland last summer. The theme of these works are orifices – each work attributed to that of a body opening. The materials are found in and around the old garage that has become his new summer studio, and the works can all be set in motion by a hand. In his characteristic manner, Wolgers has combined simple and prosaic materials, and created fragile objects with a strong and multifaceted expression.

Art is the orifices of life. Some openings receive, others give. Some both receive and give. However, the Eye is capable of receiving and giving in the same instance, like Art. / DW

Dan Wolgers lives and works in Stockholm and Sysne, Gotland.



Postcard (Self portrait), 2010.



Dan Wolgers. *Cire perdue*, Galleri Riis, Oslo, January 26 – February 24, 2008

(From the Press Release)

Dan Wolgers, Galleri Riis has the pleasure of presenting our fifth exhibition with the Swedish artist Dan Wolgers (b. 1955) is one of Scandinavia's most talked about and influential artists. In 2002 he was awarded the prestigious annual Major Grant Award from the Swedish Arts Grants Committee, with the following motivation:

Dan Wolgers's art is characterised by great integrity and intelligence while at the same time it is filled with playfulness, humour and absurd ideas. He questions and analyses, and his art becomes a distorting mirror of our human weaknesses, of the unreasonable and unexpected in the everyday. At the same time there is much seriousness in his art. He is not afraid to challenge and find artistic expressions that can provoke intellectually and emotionally. Dan Wolgers has influenced and continues to be a major influence for a younger generation of artists.

In this exhibition, Wolgers will show a new series of large and smaller sculptures in cast bronze. The models for the works are small figurines and objects the artist has found over the years and kept as inspiration. In the foundry he reworked the models – enlarged, minimized, and distorted them– until they found their final form and size. The sculptures touch aspects of and approach several central themes such as birth and life, existence and death, yearning and dream, relation and perishableness, consciousness and remembrance.

Dan Wolgers lives and works in Stockholm.



Dan Wolgers, *Livet och döden / Life and Death*, 2004



Dan Wolgers, *Gutenbergs gåta / The Riddle of Gutenberg*, 2000



Dan Wolgers, *Untitled*, 2000



Dan Wolgers, *Untitled (Perceivers)*, 1999



Dan Wolgers, *The Fancy*, 1998



Dan Wolgers, *Mor och barn / Mother and Child*, 1997



Dan Wolgers, *To be looked at, from a distance, with eyes crossed*, 1995



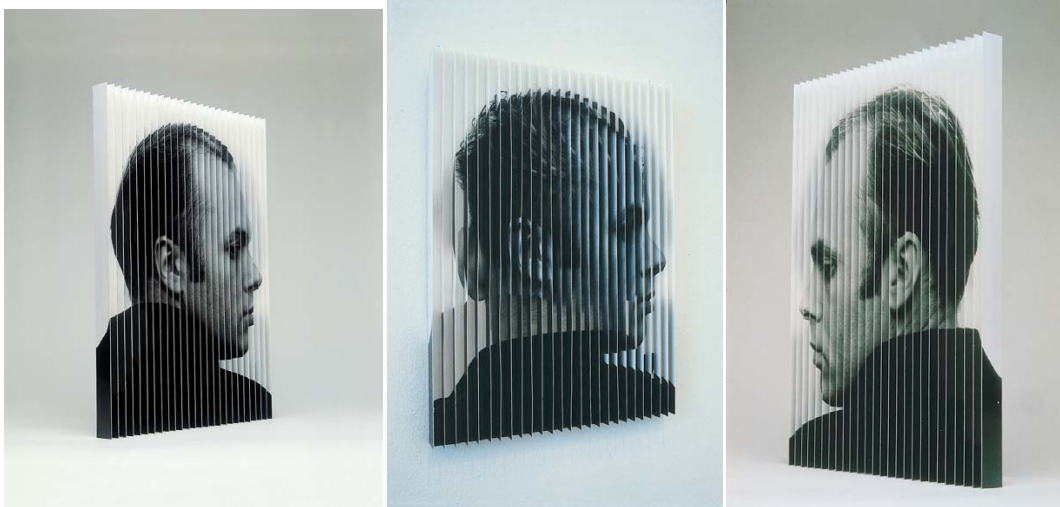
Dan Wolgers, *Object*, 1991



Dan Wolgers, *Untitled*, 1991



Dan Wolgers, Installation view, Aperto 90, Venice Biennale, 1990



Dan Wolgers, *Object*, 24 photo objects, 1989



Dan Wolgers, *Object*, 1987



Dan Wolgers, *Untitled*, 1987