

## MOVING MASS

Eva Arnqvist, Johanna Gustafsson Fürst,  
Ingela Johansson, Åsa Jungnelius, Caroline Mårtensson  
och Malin Pettersson Öberg  
December 12 2015 — February 28 2016

Kalmar konstmuseum

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Glass is never still - it is mass in movement.

Moving Mass explores glass as a concept, commodity, and as part of history and the process of production: an interplay of industry and humans as the foundation for the construction of a society and sense of community.

In Moving Mass, six Swedish artists have explored the "Kingdom of Crystal". They take as their cue the local and global transformations of society. What has been the role of glass in the Kingdom of Crystal? And how is it to live there after most of the production has been moved abroad? Has the contribution to the glass industry's success by immigrant labourers been overlooked? How are the losses and changes in terms of work, identity and community dealt with and portrayed? The exhibition at Kalmar konstmuseum is part of a longer process encom-

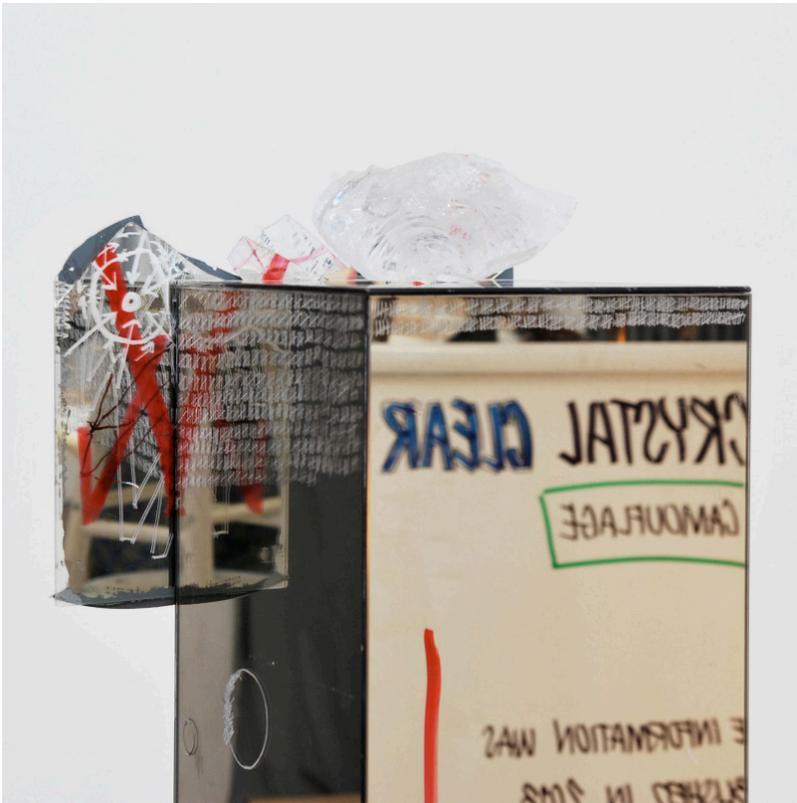
passing various activities. The artist Ingela Johansson initiated this project, inviting in turn the artists Eva Arnqvist, Johanna Gustafsson Fürst, Åsa Jungnelius, Caroline Mårtensson and Malin Pettersson Öberg. In dialogue with the place and the people who were there, and still remain, the artists analyze and portray the changes in Swedish glass production as an example of the wider transformation in society. The various works will act as catalysts for a series of talks to take place during the time that the exhibition lasts. On 18–19 February 2016, Kalmar konstmuseum and curator Lisa Rosendahl will organize an international conference on the theme. In August 2016, a second part of the conference will be organized in collaboration with the project *Residence-in-Nature*.

# ABOUT THE WORKS IN MOVING MASS

BY MUSEUM DIRECTOR BENGT OLOF  
JOHANSSON

JOHANNA GUSTAFSSON FÜRST

Johanna Gustafsson Fürst has investigated how economy and labour function and how they are generally valued in society, using the glass industry as an example. She employs methods that are most appropriately described as being akin to those used at the renowned The Actors Studio. In order to fully understand a subject, reading about it is not enough. It is also necessary to comprehensively enter the system, the context and the role. Gustafsson Fürst has followed the daily routines at Målerås glassworks, the working hours and social life in the factory. To understand the present situation in the glass industry, she records conversations with different actors in the Kingdom of Crystal: a designer, a politician, a municipal cultural affairs secretary, a glass worker, a marketer and two teenagers from Nybro. The conversation revolves around conditions in the glassworks, work, and consumption, and acts as a sort of “pedagogical machine”. They brainstorm to find the perfect product through which



*The Spectacle of Transparency*

Johanna Gustafsson Füst

Engraved mirror glass podium, objects in glass  
from Målerås glassworks, permanent marker.



*The Week Has Eight Days*  
Johanna Gustafsson Fürst  
Engraved defective cinerary urns of biodegradable glass.  
Design and innovation Annette Krahnert.  
Assembly line podium in wood and rubber.

the future can be anticipated. Virtually everything said expresses something familiar and often repeated when people talk about the Kingdom of Crystal. The participants in the conversation seem to be caught in ways of thinking nobody is prepared to see beyond.

Gustafsson Fürst uses the existing material at the glassworks as her starting point and creates three sculptures that in different ways embody the structures she is interested in, figures of thought that the artist has identified as obstacles for thinking a new future. *The Week Has Eight Days* consists of eight cinerary urns, engraved with the artist's diary entries about economy and the efforts to steer people on social benefits to any type of job [arbetslinjen]. The urns are arranged on a sort of assembly line. *The Spectacle of Transparency* is a mirror glass podium carrying a lump of transparent glass. Engraved as tally marks in the podium we find the artist's working hours recorded. The sculpture plays with the changing light in the exhibition space. Everything about this object is transparent and flexible. It displays the facts exactly, without actually disclosing anything at all. In the work *The Distribution*, the finest glass of Målerås meets the diabase from Småland, which is unique and therefore attractive on the international market. All placed on a prosaic whiteboard podium with some drawn models for distribution. A cheap and common plastic wine glass gives the crucial finishing touch. If these three works are enigmatically closed and difficult to analyse, *The Easter Flower Arrangement* is enigmatic in an

affirming fashion. Gustafsson Fürst suggests that the work contains a particular duality. It can be seen as a reflection of the aestheticization of labour. Antiques with the label “industry” sell well. Work is transformed into an idealised image, and the actual labour in the production takes place on the other side of the earth in processes concealed from those who purchase that industrial lamp from 1930. But the work also offers a utopian glimpse that carefully manifests itself. Gustafsson Fürst puts this in connection with the kind of time and attention that one can dedicate to a nostalgic item, such as this glass crucible, by—like in this case—planting a group of flowers in it. In light of the internalised political demand to work, regardless of the type of employment, even if streamlining and the development of technology give us more time, such a caring for the object paradoxically appears almost a utopian gesture.

#### MALIN PETTERSSON ÖBERG

An archive for glass production is used as a pictorial background in one slow and continuous camera movement sideways, in Malin Pettersson Öberg’s video work *Reading Glass*. The film was shot in the storage space of the glass collection around which the museum of The Glass Factory in Boda is built, a collection bought by Emmaboda municipality in 2009. The camera sweeps over shelves with glass objects by an array of different designers such as Elis Bergh, Hertha



*Reading Glass*

Malin Pettersson Öberg

HD video with voice-over, 15 min.

Hillfon, Erik Höglund and Monica Backström. Concurrently, a voice relays a number of statements relating to glass as product, the practice of collecting, and the nature of vision and the archive. The reading becomes a movable score with the objects of glass as the notations. An audio loop binds together the rhythmically placed interruptions in the film. We are, during fifteen minutes, experiencing a double flow: the impressions reach us on both a material and symbolic level. The piece speaks of origin and imitation at the same time as the artist borrows references and objects for her flow. Collecting is counterpoised to terms often used to describe the manufacture of glass: control, segregation and homogeneity. The importance of mirror glass and lenses for the development of self-perception and for making visible that which lies yonder the reach of the mere eye is narrated, while the lens of the camera guides the spectator's gaze forward along its movement through the shelves. The archive as a spell cast against the disappearance of all materials and of time itself.

The voice we hear is that of Malin Pettersson Öberg. The personal intonation stands in contrast to the crisp image's evasiveness. It is informative but not didactic, and remains on the level of figuration that targets the unconscious affectively. Pettersson Öberg generously offers a rapprochement to the archive in general and the glass archive in particular. It becomes a multifaceted room where we can comprehend ourselves, and the world.

## EVA ARNQVIST

Eva Arnqvist makes Kosta an example of a decisive turn in contemporary society as she takes on the task to show what this change contains and how it physically manifests itself. It is difficult to see the age in which we live other than as fragments of an ongoing flow that never wants to make itself known for what it is. In light of this, the magnitude and the aspirations of Arnqvist's project appear monumental. The decisive turns are usually something discovered in retrospect, at a time when the opportunities to do something about what has happened are few and limited.

A flow of newspaper articles on the wall narrates the changes in Kosta over the past ten years. Media is allowed to channel a generalised public impression of what is happening on the floor below. There, on eight tables, the artist presents, with the meticulousness of a detective, items from her local investigations. The material is organized into themes corresponding to a number of phenomena that have been significant for Kosta, like the labour movement, the Kosta outlet, branding and the idea of the Swedish Community Centre [Folkets Hus]. Arnqvist compiles photographs, excerpts of interviews that she has conducted with people who live and work in Kosta, objects and found material. These become the components that in different ways show the transformation over the last decade when the concept of the glassworks industry changed from being about the production of glass to being about the



*Shifting positions - a study in red*

Eva Arnqvist

Installation with eight tables with objects,  
interviews, text and photographs, and a  
slideshow with article archive 2005–2015.

production of experiences. This major transformation has had consequences not only for the physical environment, but also for how a future can be imagined. The title *A Study in Red* originates from the symbolically significant red colour that binds the material together, both historically and in the present. Kosta was one of the strongholds of the Swedish labour movement and a large collection of red banners has been preserved there. Today red has become the agreed-upon colour used in the marketing of Småland. Arnqvist's material is continuously associative and subjectively composed. At the same time, this richness affords openings for each of us to find our own connections.

Kosta is not an exception. What has happened there is happening in many places in Sweden and the rest of the world. Is this a long-term sustainable development? Eva Arnqvist's work invites us to seriously ask this crucial question.



*Reverberation*

Caroline Mårtensson

Concrete table, glass carafes with plants, wall-mounted display case with information about the glassworks areas where the plants were collected.

## CAROLINE MÅRTENSSON

The environmental pollution created by the glassworks has made disconcerting headlines in the press. Caroline Mårtensson's work *Reverberation* opens a possibility for us as spectators to confront the issue in more detail. What are the real consequences of too much lead, arsenic and cadmium in the ground? How are we to interpret measurements and thresholds? We now have to live with the consequences that were unknown in the past, or ignored for economic reasons by the owners of the production. This is what *Reverberation* suggests. The structures of repression and ignorance are exactly the same as in the case of so many other contemporary large and small problems. How are we to understand our own best as biological and social beings, and be able to act according to it? Mårtensson uses careful studies of what is known today about the pollution connected to the glass industry and the available plans for cleaning it up to construct her work. She has visited glassworks areas, spoken to those who live and work there, and consulted experts. Two specimens of a number of plants have been collected from ten of the most polluted glasswork areas. These ten places are the most contaminated in all of Sweden. One of the two specimens has been handed in to analysis, and the other has been sealed in different glass containers and lowered into the ground. The recorded levels of lead, arsenic and cadmium in the plant have subsequently been engraved on the surfaces of the outside of the glass containers. Some of the levels are extremely high, others not. The point is that we can relate to, and feel for, the dried plants. Drawing

pins on photos of the glassworks make it possible to see where exactly these plants have stood, in what landscape they unknowingly have been poisoned. The simplicity and beauty of this arrangement makes the connection brutal. The artist creates a visual form for what we knew but maybe never understood. The difference between an artwork and a report from a County Administrative Board is enormous. Caroline Mårtensson's work shows with precision why we need both.

#### INGELA JOHANSSON

The video artwork of Ingela Johansson is a micro biography of the glass workers from the Sudetenland that were given employment in the glass industry of Småland after the Second World War. The story is constructed like a triptych. There is a reading of two actors taking turns facing each other, and a slideshow in the shape of two hands leafing through a visual material that makes connections to what the actors say. The text and the images are the result of a comprehensive research by the artist, consisting of interviews, individual stories from inhabitants in the towns of the glass works and a large amount of archival material.

The work's first chapter tells the story of the voyage and dislocation of the Sudeten Germans from Czechoslovakia to Sweden, and how the workers ended up in the towns of the Swedish glassworks in the aftermath of the Second World War. The narrative elucidates how, and why, this workforce was brought



*In the light and shade of the ornaments - a rehearsal.*

Ingela Johansson

Video work in two chapters, with wallpaper  
inspired by a glass pattern by  
the architect Josef Hoffmann.



*Look A Commodity That Can Speak!*  
Åsa Jungnelius  
Diorama installation with some twenty  
objects, with texts describing the history  
and origin of the objects.

over, and the effect of the migration on both a personal and industrial level, including how the National Labour Market Board and the labour movement organized the new arrivals. In the second chapter, Ingela Johansson turns towards the local context. She looks at how the glass at some Swedish glassworks was inspired by the traditions of the Sudeten Germans, especially the ones originating from northern Bohemia. We are told about what happened to one of the world's last kingdoms of crystal, Bohemia, during and after the Nazi occupation and under Communism. The artist also illustrates how centuries of migrations from central Europe have influenced the Swedish glass industry, a vital element for understanding how the Sudeten Germans were regarded as craftsmen.

The work also reflects the concurrent narrative of the effect of globalisation on local production. Influences from the emerging and increasingly hegemonic Austro-Hungarian cultural centre in Vienna at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries spread to Czech provinces, Bohemia, and onwards to the Swedish glass industry. The essayistic narration guides us through these different places, histories and conditions. It moves between the individual level to raise questions regarding national representation and identity, but it also highlights how the destinies of the glass workers were shaped by war and different political systems.

There is a natural ease to the way that Ingela Johansson, who hails from the glasswork town of Boda, unravels with an in-

clusive pedagogy a story of great contemporary importance. She shows how migration and the transfer of knowledge are connected and how individual human lives are affected by the dictates of political developments.

### ÅSA JUNGNELIUS

Of all the artists in the exhibition, Åsa Jungnelius is closest to the actual production under scrutiny. This because she makes objects of glass, but also because of her role in shaping the contemporary image of the Kingdom of Crystal. She was affiliated to the Kosta Boda glassworks until the end of the 2000s. During her time as an in-house artist, Jungnelius became widely celebrated for the Lipstick, an object still in production though now manufactured in Slovenia. Three years ago, at the end of her time as Kosta Boda's own artist, Jungnelius moved her work to her home in Månsamåla. Today she has her own glass furnace in her studio. When invited to participate in Moving Mass, Jungnelius decided to address the image of herself as the "young" designer leading glass manufacturing to the future in a smart and technically accomplished fashion, and with a feminist message. She has built a diorama about her professional history, as in her contacts with important individuals and events in the last decade. The timeline and axis of the narration is provided by the different versions of Lipstick that have existed during this period. It begins with the handmade work in 2005 when it was part of an artistic practice in the art world, progressing to the phase when the work entered

commercial production. 176 000 Lipstick items have to this day reached the market. Jungnelius' time as an in-house artist at Kosta Boda generated a number of works intended to be part of the domestic realm of the home. At the same time she also made objects for artistic exhibitions in the world of contemporary art. She has consciously moved between the different material and social spheres. Commercial production has always been an interesting way for Jungnelius to communicate with people in their homes. In the work she exhibits here she again finds a way to bring forth the figurative subject as well as she is critical of the demand for mythic designers elevated to heroes that the glass industry uses to sell products. Åsa Jungnelius is both inside and outside the phenomenon she studies in a meta-work that destabilises expected positions. It is a pink dream of hard facts that we gaze at as we are confronted with an artist's fight for the right to think and act freely in a globalised economy.

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