BODIL AXELSSON

Sound machine through city space:
the sprawled studio and the
signature at the center

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ART THROUGH CITY SPACE

All artistic work, like all human activity, involves the joint activity of a number, often large number, of people. Through their cooperation, the art work we eventually see or hear comes to be and continues to be. The work always shows signs of that cooperation.

Howard Becker 2008 (1982) [1]

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I had the opportunity to follow Esther Shalev-Gerz through the city space of Norrköping at the time of the production of Sound Machine.[2] During a period of approximately 18 months Esther Shalev-Gerz recurrently visited Norrköping to realize the work. In a sense, and for a while, she and I switched the roles prescribed by classical anthropology. In classical anthropology the ethnographer

[1] Howard Becker, *Art Worlds 25th Anniversary edition updated and expanded*, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008 (1982), p. 1)
[2] From Wikipedia: '**Norrköping** is a city in the province of Östergötland in eastern Sweden and the seat of Norrköping Municipality, Östergötland County. The city has a population of 83,561 inhabitants in 2005, out of a municipal total of 127,059, making it Sweden's tenth largest city and eighth largest municipality'. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Norrk%C3%B6ping (accessed 20100329).

inhabits an unfamiliar locality in order to learn about local culture with the aid of one or several field assistants. In this case, the artist made short regular visits to the place I worked to do an artwork on past-present relationships in Norrköping. Esther Shalev-Gerz lived in Paris and travelled extensively between different places. She taught at art schools and ran several parallel projects. She positioned herself as a catalyst of localized activities, whereas I, the ethnographer, acted as her guide. I was given a role similar to the "local fixers foreign correspondents hire to get accustomed to new terrains"[3]. With the aid of colleagues, I introduced her to people and places in Norrköping and documented the meetings in fieldnotes and videos.

The following account of Sound Machine's production differs from Esther Shalev-Gerz' own. The text de-centers the artist's role in order to make visible the labor of those who collaborated with her. Esther Shalev-Gerz' generally acknowledges collaborators in exhibition folders, but when her works are presented on her website, or discussed by curators in catalogues, she comes forward as the main creator, usually the only one in the process that is

[3] Amahl Bishara, "Local Hands, International News: Palestinian Journalists and the International Media", *Ethnography* 2006 7: 19-46, p. 22, with reference to: Hannerz, Ulf (2004) *Foreign News: Exploring the World of Foreign Correspondents*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
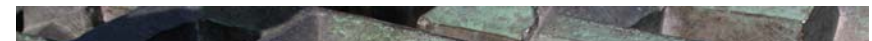
named. On the other hand, she is one of those artists who acknowledges, and productively makes use of, the fact that artworks more often than not are made by many hands.[4] Today, a growing number of artists negotiate with institutions and invite people outside the art world to be part of their works.[5] This report will unravel, on the basis of ethnographic experience, fieldnotes and video recordings, one specific case of what is generally labeled collaborative, participatory, situated or dialogical art. In doing this, it will touch upon the ways that "itinerant artists", with strong curriculum vitaes and signatures, produced by a series of works in different cities, enhance the value of places, institutions and projects by collaborating locally.[6] The report starts out with addressing how Sound Machine connected local institution's economic resources and competences and the ways in which positions for participation and collaboration emerged. It proceeds by investigating participants' contributions to Sound Machine's enactment of the gap between Norrköping's industrial past and its current investments in symbolic economy, education and culture. This is followed by discussions of

how Sound Machine was edited and framed so as to ease its way toward an international career. Finally, the report lands in some conclusions on the mixing of production models in Sound Machine.

Collaborating institutions

Three local institutions collaborated to produce Sound Machine. The City Museum (Stadsmuseet) provided cultural historical material for Esther Shalev-Gerz to work upon. Norrköping Art Museum (Norrköpings konstmuseum) curated the work. Linköping University supported Sound Machine with a local coordinator (the author), a student assistant, as well as technical support and expertise for recording, scanning and filming. The Nvision studio[7], which produced the 3D models, was connected to the university. Both museums provided the technical support that was necessary for the work to be activated.

It was the university, via Karin Becker, that invited Esther Shalev-Gerz to Norrköping. The university was a strange partner for an art project. At first everything emerged smoothly with Sound Machine, but after a few months the process was heavily constrained by the fact that the major funding of the work, a grant

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[4] Cf. Howard Becker, *Art Worlds*.

[5] David Butler & Vivien Reiss, *Art of Negotiation*, London: Arts Council of England, 2007.

[6] Miwon Kwon, "One Place after Another: Notes on Site Specificity", *October*. No. 80, Spring 1997, pp. 85-110.

[7] Nvision studio has changed name to C-studio. http://www.visualiseringscenter.se/1/1.0.1.0/84/2/ (last accessed 2010.04.14).

from the Swedish Research Council, was administrated by a university department. The department did not sign a contract for the work and the months to come were tumultuous as uneasy financial situations caused Esther Shalev-Gerz worries. For her, willingness to pay for a project was a sign of trust. Being a bureaucratic institution, mostly employing Swedish residents on permanent posts, the university had problems with the issue of disbursing rather large amounts of money to Esther Shalev-Gerz' account in France. The clerk at the department had to work out solutions that suited both the national rules for public authorities and Esther Shalev-Gerz. Since Shalev-Gerz also was on a contract for a guest professorship at Linköping University the situation was complicated even further. The drawn-out process caused irritation and feelings of insecurity for Esther Shalev-Gerz, as well as for the department that hosted her. With one foot in Sound Machine and the other in the department I found myself in a tense situation, being messenger between two worlds. I wanted Sound Machine to happen and had started to feel loyal to Esther Shalev-Gerz, but was equally loyal to my university department.

Sound Machine was back on its feet again when Helena Persson, head of Norrköping Art Museum, guaranteed that her institution would curate Sound Machine and contribute financially to the project. Esther Shalev-Gerz expressed her confidence in the head of the museum, as well as the ability of her institution to host and curate the work. Persson and Shalev-Gerz had been in contact previously and Norrköping Art Museum holds a respected position in the art world, based on its collections and temporary exhibitions. In contrast to both the university and the City Museum, the Art Museum routinely participates in the making of artworks. The institution was on a day-to-day basis part of what sociologist Howard Becker calls the art world, which encompasses all those institutions and people who take part in cultural products defined as art.[8]

Sound Machine connected institutions with varying missions and that were placed in different parts of the city. In a very corporeal sense, Sound Machine linked art and cultural history. The spatial layout of the city accentuates the division of labor between these two strands of public culture. The modernistic and monumental building of Norrköping Art Museum has an elevated position at the top of the city's main street. The City Museum is housed in a group of small scale historic buildings in The Industrial Landscape

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[8] Howard Becker, *Art Worlds*.
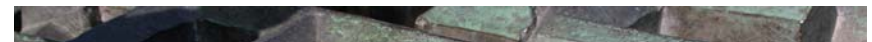
(Industrilandskapet)[9]. Sound Machine reconnected two institutions that once had been one, Norrköping's Museum. The city's art collection and its cultural historical material belonged to one and the same institution until The City Museum was founded in 1979 and reopened in its new premises in 1981.[10] Besides encouraging its audience to move between the two institutions, Sound Machine encouraged their staff to negotiate, develop, and strengthen their respective museum's previous contacts with each other, as well as with the university.

Photo: Bodil Axelsson

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[9] Like many other European and American cities, Norrköping has responded to economical change by investing in a symbolic economy evolving around education, heritage and art. Norrköping was once one of Sweden's foremost industrial cities. During the twentieth century it underwent recurrent periods of de-industrialization. The decline manifested itself in the industrial area situated right at the city center. By the seventies the area was rundown, scruffy and untidy. It was very much perceived as a monument of failure and unemployment. Most textile mills had closed down and the buildings then housed minor companies and temporary activities. However, the paper mill was still working and the area was closed to the public and the common pedestrian. It was a self-imposed secret city. Gradually the city started to reevaluate the area. During the past forty years it has been redeveloped, redesigned and renamed the Industrial Landscape. See for instance Annika Alzén, *Fabriken som kulturarv: frågan om industrilandskapets bevarande i Norrköping 1950-1985*, Stockholm/Stehag: Symposion, 1996; Mattias Legnér, *Historic Rehabilitation of Industrial Sites: Cases from North American and Swedish Cities*, Tema Kultur & Samhälle, Linköpings universitet, 2009.

[10] Annika Alzén, *Fabriken som kulturarv* pp. 55-57; Lena Gemzöe, Anne-Li Lindgren & Johan Fornäs, *Två kulturstäder: kultur och politik på lokala arenor*, Centrum för kommunstrategiska studier, Rapport 2006: 3, Linköping: Linköpings universitet, 2006, p. 39.

Positions for participation

A division of labor between the two museums and the university emerged as the project evolved. Most collaborators in Sound Machine took part in the work due to their functions at one of the collaborating institutions. However, Sound Machine also allowed participants to temporarily expand their functions and reflect upon unfamiliar topics. Sound Machine pushed Helena Persson and curator Helena Scragg from the art museum to reflect upon memory and the cultural history of Norrköping. Anette Kindahl, who was experienced in interviewing and gathering material for the City Museum's archive and collection, was transformed into a subject of artistic inquiry and portraiture. Others developed their work related skills. For example, Anders Greiff, technician at the City Museum, developed a solution for installing sound under a bridge. In doing this he combined his ordinary job with sound engineering that was one of his hobbies.

Within the complex network of support personnel involved in the realization of Sound Machine, I identified four distinct positions for participation, involving different areas of responsibility. There was the position of *the explorer* who contributed to conceptual aspects of the work, that is Sound Machine's inquiries into past-present-relationships. Another position was that of *the editor*, a function that made the choices which shaped Sound Machine's appearance. A third position was *the technician* and a fourth was the *negotiator*, or the fixer, who paved the way for Sound Machine in Norrköping. The positions were not tied to specific individuals. One and the same person could alternate between them during the course of the production and depending on the situation. Anders Greiff stepped out of his position as a technician in order to reinstall the sound of machines in the Industrial Landscape, to explore how it could have sounded. When Sound Machine was on, he took care of the installation's maintenance, but he, and his colleagues at The City Museum, also had to negotiate the presence of the sound. The museum's staff had to handle complaints from people who worked in the area, which required that the acoustic level of Sound Machine be lowered. Greiff thus alternated between the positions of explorer, technician and negotiator.

I was also a person who shifted positions during the process. I took the position of explorer when I assisted Esther Shalev-Gerz in interviewing. I acted mainly as a negotiator and fixer. I scheduled Esther Shalev-Gerz' meetings in Norrköping and negotiated with colleagues to mobilize resources for Sound Machine. The position of negotiator was taken by curators and university people,
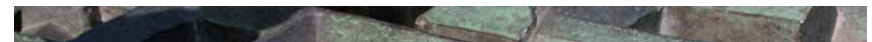
particularly Kosta Econoumo shared his local contacts to make Sound Machine possible.

The relationships between participants shifted between being social and being instrumental or businesslike. People were appointed to do jobs. At the same time, Sound Machine sparked sociality and emerging friendships, especially among the negotiators. Project matters were often discussed and settled on coffee breaks, lunches and dinners at restaurants. The film photographer, Mike Jarmon, was for example taken onboard after being interviewed by the artist at a lunch. This occasion resembled an audition or a work interview. The lunches, and the walks, however, generally flickered between personal talk and project planning; during some of her visits, Esther Shalev-Gerz stayed in my apartment. It was not unusual for production matters to be discussed at dinner parties at the homes of colleagues from the university as the work tied in and proliferated on a collegial social network at the department and beyond. Even though Sound Machine allowed for people to expand or shift positions, some of the hierarchies in the world of the museums persisted. Sound Machine made me aware of how subordinate technicians were to curators in the museum structure. Esther Shalev-Gerz approached them differently as she temporarily bonded with them by acknowledging the creative, problem solving, and

innovative aspects of being a technician. But she clearly had more respect for the curator's role and authority.

Manufacturing machines

Photo: Bodil Axelsson

Sound Machine is an artistic inquiry into a city's past-present relationship. The work sets out to explore the gap between the knowledge that one might have today on textile manufacturing and

what might have been known and experienced at the time the factories were in operation. As Esther Shalev-Gerz explains in her own account of Sound Machine, she developed the work as a response to the lack of signs in the Industrial Landscape of its noisy heritage. Conceptually, Sound Machine was energized by a split between the eye-catching facets of the industrial landscape and the dark genre of industrial music. In his analysis of "the industrial cool", the historizing and aestheticisation of manufacturing industries, ethnologist Robert Willim suggests that light and sound have been assigned very different roles. Carefully designed lighting is often used to underline the visual aspects of the industrial past, to produce spectacular effects and enhance visitor's appreciation of industrial environments.[11] The sound of manufacturing has been treated quite differently. The subcultural genre of industrial music has reworked it by the means of synthesizers, sequencers and guitars. This music is provocatively dark and noisy. In its early days it was often produced so as to express dissatisfaction and dissent with, for example, totalitarianism and consumerism.[12]

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[11] Robert Willim, *Industrial Cool: om postindustriella fabriker*, Lund: Humanistiska fakulteteten, Lunds universitet, 2008, pp. 82-84.
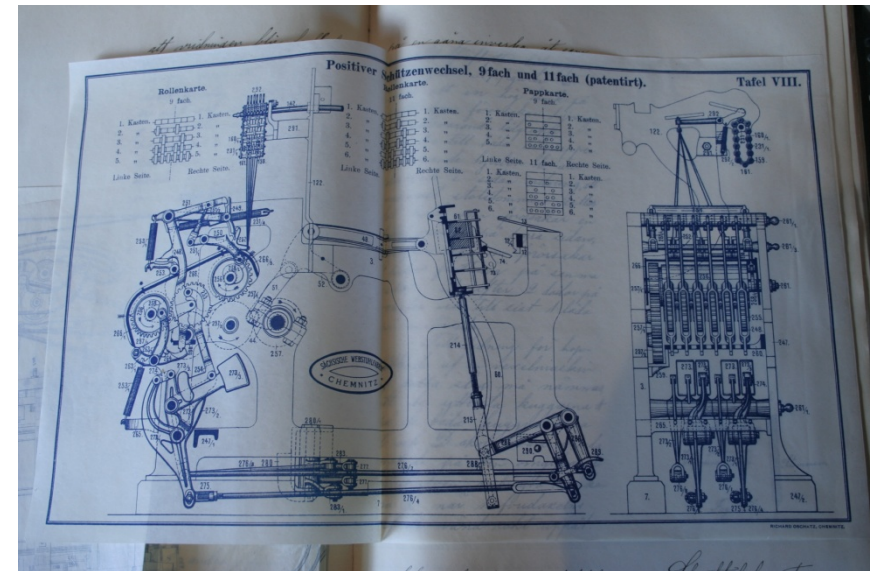[12] Ibid, pp. 110-111.

Photo: Esther Shalev-Gerz

Esther Shalev-Gerz recorded sound from looms at The City Museum and handed the recordings over to Christopher Fleischner, a Paris-based musician who reworked them during a visit to Canada. Anette Kindahl found two books with blueprints depicting details from textile machines in the archive of the City Museum. Esther Shalev-Gerz made a selection from the books and handed over five blueprints to a 3D modeler. Kristofer Jansson, skilled in digital technology, then modeled five digital representations that mimicked

textile machines. Each machine was then duplicated and animated so as to form a hall of machines.

Esther Shalev-Gerz and Kosta Economou negotiated the production of the 3D models with Tomas Rydell, the director of the Nvision studio. At their first meeting Kristofer Jansson and Tomas Rydell showed some of their work to Esther Shalev-Gerz. The conversation moved back and forth between economy and technology. The concept of Sound Machine was discussed too. Esther Shalev-Gerz presented the themes that she wanted to explore: the displacement of the textile machines, sounds and beats of machines and what women who were pregnant while working in the mills remembered or had forgotten about factory sound. She described how she imagined Sound Machine and made it clear that she was not interested in what she called scientific representations. Her machines ought to flicker between dream and reality. Referring to a book she had recently read, she explained to us that the musical genres of techno and house developed in Germany and America when factories were closed down.[13]

This procedure was reiterated five months later; this time the discussions circled around realization rather than the concepts that motivated the work. The conversation unfolded as a series of questions and answers: Should the animations resemble the blueprints? Should they produce an interactive? Should the movements of the machines be authentic? Esther Shalev-Gerz answered the questions. She gave directions but also made plenty of space for interpretation by the technicians. She stated that she wanted to see what they could accomplish.[14]

The first animations did not live up to her expectations. When receiving the explorer's first try, the artist asked him to start all over again. At the second try Kristofer Jansson created the embryo of what later would become the first halls of machines. But the process did stretch out in time. The 3D modeler was assigned to other jobs. Because the modeling for Sound Machine was more time consuming and more difficult than expected, Kosta Economou had to renegotiate the contract with the Nvision-studio.[15] The delay upset Esther Shalev-Gerz. The tense situation pointed to how the work depended on all the participants delivering their contribution on schedule.

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[13] Fieldnotes March 29, 2007. The book was: *Multiple Meaning: Techno: an Artistic and Political Laboratory of the Present by Michel Gaillot*, Jean-Luc Nancy & Michel Maffesoli.

[14] Fieldnotes October 3, 2007.
[15] Emails December 18, 2007 – January 16, 2008.

Sound Machine developed on the cusp between the actual, already known, and the virtual, imagined, technological possibilities. When discussing 3D modeling with Kristofer Jansson, Esther Shalev-Gerz declared that she "wanted to understand a little bit, but the moment you know the limits, you don't go over them, but I want to be possible to get over the limits. Everybody has their own freedom".[16] This statement could be interpreted as if she, through works like Sound Machine, not only explored past-present relationships, but also the possibilities of digital technology. Sound Machine was, in this respect, dependent on the labors of the participants since Esther Shalev-Gerz used her inexperience to produce particular conceptual effects. The participant's inexperience was used too.

Sound machine was dependent on Kristofer Jansson's skills, but he knew very little of mechanical technology. Esther Shalev-Gerz used this bug as a feature in the production. She clearly expressed that she did not want him to look at the machines at The City Museum, next door to his office. She also made efforts to prevent me from trying to explain how the depicted punch cards moved around when machines were operating.[17] Kristofer Jansson and I were both commuters and we sometimes met on the train between Norrköping and Linköping. From these meetings I learned that it was a true challenge for a person with very little experience of mechanical technology in general, and no knowledge at all of looms, to create moving images of full machines out of partial depictions. Kristofer Jansson did not elaborate much on his own efforts, but at the opening of Sound Machine he made jokes about the circumstance that when he finally got the hang of it; he said it was like "manufacturing machines".[18] He thus shifted position from being an explorer to one of a manufacturer in control of his tools.

Staging remembering and forgetting

The most important participants in Sound Machine's exploration of past-present relationships in Norrköping were, according to Esther Shalev-Gerz, the women who were video recorded while being interviewed and confronted with the sound recordings. Susanne Spetz, Astrid Andersson, Lena Wigh, Berit Wigh, Kristina Franzén, Gun Sandström, Anita Karlsson, Louise Pett, Inger Kindahl and Anette Kindahl were invited to take part in a film session. This session was probably the most complex part of Sound Machine production-wise. Several negotiators were involved in the planning which took weeks since it involved all in all around twenty persons.

[16] Video recording October 2, 2007.
[17] Fieldnotes September 7-9, 2007.

[18] Fieldnotes, April 19, 2008.

Anette Kindahl gathered and coordinated the attendance of her mother, her friends and their daughters. As she herself was to be filmed, she shifted between the positions of negotiator and explorer. With the aid of students and colleagues, the photographer Mike Jarmon organized a temporary studio in a building in the Industrial Landscape. He also had to pick up a special video camera on his way from his home in Stockholm to Norrköping. He had just returned from a holiday in the US and the schedule was tight as there were a lot of details that had to fall into place. He was thus both technician and negotiator at the same time as he made aesthetical choices while filming.

The film session very much resembled an experimental situation set up in order to explore the women's reactions to the sound. We raised a podium in front of a green screen. A couple of stools were placed on the podium and a small tool used in factory work was placed nearby. Two film cameras and one camera for still images were rigged on tripods in front of the podium. Several lighting instruments were directed at the scene so as to produce the even lighting required by the chroma keying procedure that later on would allow for the moving images of the women to be mounted with the 3D modeled machines. When the women then took their places on the set, couple after couple, they wore microphones. Loudspeakers stood at the back end of the room.

The women were positioned as explorers by the artist, who saw them as critical to Sound Machine's inquiry into how sound might be remembered and imagined in and through the present. According to the processual approach to memory, elaborated by David Middleton and Steven Brown, remembering and forgetting are intrinsic parts of human encounters. Objects, landscapes and sensorial impressions, as well as talk, gestures and the ways people interact with each other, are crucial for the ways in which the past approaches people in the present.[19] With the sound, the factory tool and the questions we had set a scene for remembering to occur.

At first, the atmosphere in the studio was kind of tense. The team was not sure if the cameras would work as expected or how the interviews would turn out. After a while we relaxed and Esther Shalev-Gerz and I found time to reflect upon our different ideas of interviewing. I did not quite catch what my role in the interviews ought to be. I translated her questions into Swedish and sometimes posed follow-up questions of my own. Esther Shalev-Gerz let me know that she did not want "research interviews". By research

[19] David Middleton & Steven D. Brown, *The Social Psychology of Experience: Studies in Remembering and Forgetting*, London: Sage, 2005.

interviews she meant interviews in which the same set of questions is asked in the exact same order to each interviewee. I explained that I preferred unstructured interviews that more or less resembled conversations. She turned down that approach, too. She wanted the women to talk freely about their experience of the sound, how it felt in their bodies and if they liked it or if they missed it. However, when the women did not elaborate much on the sound, Esther Shalev-Gerz then redirected her main interest to the women's facial and bodily reactions rather than their words.[20]

In passing, it is interesting to note that even though an artistic inquiry employs concepts found in theoretical writings or procedures typically described in social or cultural scientific methodological approaches, their meanings and implementations might turn out quite different. In a similar vein as works of art might challenge the convention that historical representations ought to be based on documentation and presented chronologically,[21] artistic interviews and experimental situations might challenge methodologies from both qualitative social or cultural research and experimental psychology. A social psychologist, or a cultural researcher, following in the footsteps of Middleton and Brown would have preferred to record or interview the women in their "natural" everyday settings, where they usually meet. An experimental psychologist could, on the other hand, set up a similar situation as Sound Machine's. S(he) would, however, be testing an hypothesis and follow conventional control methods. Just as Esther Shalev-Gerz used her inexperience in 3D modeling, and Kristofer Janson's in mechanical technology, to produce particular effects with the machines, here she employed *associations* to theoretical concepts and research methods to produce images and words that she could then explore in networked processes of editing and display. In a sense, artistic inquiry, focusing less on the precise role and meanings of language and discursive presentations than researchers in the fields of culture and social psychology generally do, may be better suited for exploring pre-conceptual or non-conceptual experiences – like memories of sound.[22]

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[20] Fieldnotes, Nov 7-9, 2007.
[21] Cf. Simone Osthof, *Performing the Archive: the Transformation of the Archive in Contemporary Art from Repository of Documents to Art Medium*, New York/Dresden: Atropos Press, 2009.

[22] Cf. Karin Becker in this publication; Henk Borgdorff, "Artistic Research and Academia: Un Uneasy Relationship", in Autonomi och egenart – konstnärlig forskning söker identitet, red. Torbjörn Lind, Årsbok KFoU 2008 Vetenskapsrådet, pp. 85-96.

From localized experiences to portable prototype

The film footage and the interviews underwent extensive editing. For various practical reasons, the final editing of the moving images took place in Paris. There Yannig Willmann cut down hours of footage to around four minutes. He also composited the moving images with the 3D animated machines. Meanwhile, the interviews were edited. The words of the women were transformed by being translated from Swedish to English and then back again. Fanny Hed Jonsson, the student assistant, transcribed the interviews and translated them into English. With questions and answers, her Swedish transcription encompassed around 11, 500 words. I was positioned as a first editor and asked to do a selection of statements from the interviews, to pick out telling and significant quotations. Esther Shalev-Gerz then made a selection herself, altering wording and tenses in the women's answers. The final selection of quotes came to 419 words.

Sound Machine draws on the significance placed on the figure of the female worker in the Norrköping context. Women are here important for "trajectories of continuity and change".[23] Photos and moving images of women in machine halls are not unusual in books and promotional movies on Norrköping. Several representations of

[23] I owe this phrasing to Middleton & Brown, p. 109.

the female work force are signposted in the industrial landscape too. A bronze statue of the writer Moa Martinson (1890-1964), who wrote about her childhood in the industrial city, is placed in the midst of Norrköping Science Park.[24] Another work of public art shows a group of women, under the lead of socialist agitator Kata Dalström (1858-1923), attacking a golden calf that symbolizes the capitalist economy.[25] Yet another representation of a female worker is found in the staircase of The Museum of Work. Here the biography of Alva Carlsson (who worked in the building 1927 – 1962) is conveyed in short texts and doll house-sized models to metonymically impersonate subjects of joy and sorrow for working class women in the 20th century.[26]

In processes of editing, framing and exhibiting Sound Machine, the participating women were moved out of context. They no longer solely represented mothers and daughters from the city of Norrköping, but became representatives of Esther Shalev-Gerz'

[24] Norrköpings Kommun, "Peter Linde (f 1946), Moa Martinson, 1994", http://www.norrkoping.se/kultur-fritid/museer/konstmuseum/offentlig/moa/, last visited 2010.01.04.
[25] Norrköpings kommun, "Pye Engström (f 1928), Vår enighets fana, 1984", http://www.norrkoping.se/kultur-fritid/museer/konstmuseum/offentlig/enighet/, last visited 2010.01.04.
[26] Arbetets Museum, "Historien om Alva", "http://www.arbetetsmuseum.se/Default.aspx?&a=6561&c=4329&b=1, last visited 2010.01.04.

skills in portraiture. When discussing matters on editing and compiling with Esther-Shalev-Gerz I noted a meticulous regard for the aesthetic and conceptual quality of her work. She privileged her own standards over those she collaborated with. It was as if she wanted her conceptual approach to be refined and released through a process of condensation that intensified the result. The moving images of women mounted with 3D modeled machines took on the quality of prototypes. Prototypes summon, organize and concentrate various details from unspecific pasts into an image. In Middleton and Brown's words:

> The summated prototypical image is, then, not a direct representation of some event as it happened or some object as it was, but, rather, a compelling construction that draws its power from the ability to incorporate the listener or viewer into the texture of the world it recollects. [27]

Neither the fragments from the interviews nor the compiled moving images attempted to be representations of some true or authentic past. Nor did they attempt to represent the moment of production. Rather, they were aimed evoking in the audience more general processes of remembering, forgetting and societal change. In the words of curator Lisa LeFeuvre:

[27] Middleton & Brown, p. 125.

> Over three decades Esther Shalev-Gerz has consistently performed a process of unravelling particularities in order to reflect on the ways in which the generalities of history and memory are constructed.[28]

In addition to pointing to the ways Esther Shalev-Gerz' works touch upon universal aspects of past-present-relationships, the original context of this quote places Sound Machine in the framework of her collected works. It is a piece of artwriting. Artwriting, states George E. Marcus and Fred R. Myers in their introduction to an edited book dedicated to a critical anthropology of art, is essential for the production of cultural value for artists and their artworks.[29] It is internal, rather and external, to the art world, and it gives directions on how to interpret works of art. In this case, Le Feuvre's artwriting adds value and inscribes meaning to several of Shalev-Gerz' works by joining them under a common umbrella.

Lisa LeFeuvre's text is published in the catalogue for an exhibition at Jeu de Paume in Paris. In this show, a curatorial selection of Esther Shalev-Gerz' works is presented. After its display

[28] Lisa LeFeuvre,, "Nothing is Written: We All Know That. Don't we", in Esther Shalev-Gerz, Jeu de Paume, Paris: Fage editions, 2010, p. 147.
[29] George E. Marcus & Fred R Myers, "The Traffic in Art and Culture: an Introduction", in *The Traffic in Culture: Reconfiguring Art and Anthropology*, eds. Marcus & Myers, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 1995, pp. 27-28.

in Norrköping April 19, 2008 – May 25, 2008, Sound Machine found a new place on Esther Shalev-Gerz' website, alongside her other works in a kind of public archive. The work embarked on yet another career in Paris February 9, 2010 – June 6, 2010. A prerequisite for Sound Machine's flight from one city space to another was of course that the installation was portable, that its different parts could be rejoined in a new context. Another condition for Sound Machine's additional career was that it adhered to the standards of the institutional parts of the art world, the complex of museums, curators and publications, to which Esther Shalev-Gerz was connected. Sound Machine was prepared for this move already in Norrköping.

The sprawled studio, participation and the importance of the signature

When Sound Machine was made public in Norrköping, Helena Persson and Helena Scragg at Norrköping Art Museum came forth as its main negotiators. They were familiar with the rules of the art world and directed their attention towards the artist's wishes. Sound Machine consolidated resources and competences from three local institutions and Persson and Scragg had to balance competing interests. Helena Persson carefully discussed the spatial dimensions

of the work and thus took the position as editor. In order to produce the texts for the gallery spaces, the folder and the press, she and Helena Scragg listened to Esther Shalev-Gerz and tread a careful line between giving clues to the significance of the work and leaving space for audience interpretations. They negotiated among the three collaborating institutions and prepared for Sound Machine's international career by supporting the choice of an English title, by making the exhibition folder bilingual and by adhering to the artist's prioritizing of interview quotations in English in the gallery.[30] In the folder that introduced and marketed Sound Machine, Esther Shalev-Gerz was presented as the sole author of the work. Her name, together with the title of the work, was printed on the folder's front page, alongside still images from the video footage.

The public presentation of the work placed Sound Machine in a production mode that can be referred to as the signature style of art. According to the signature style, a work of art is the result of the choices of the artist who then takes the full credit for a work. And further, the meaning of the work ought to be traced to the artist's

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[30] Fieldnotes Nov. 27, 2007; March 4, 2008; April, 14-15, 2008.

intentions.[31] As stated by Irit Rogoff, despite various collaborative initiatives in the contemporary art scene, "both market value and interpretative values have continued to depend on the undisputed centrality of the author".[32] The signature-style is often associated with Romanticism and the creative and unique individual. John Roberts instead connects the signature-style to an artisanal model of teamwork and studio work. In the artisanal model for art production, artists orchestrate the labors of assistants and technicians. The model is commonly associated to artists such as Rubens and Rembrandt, but it has later been appropriated by, among others, Andy Warhol, Jeff Koons and Damien Hirst.[33] Esther Shalev-Gerz does not operate on the art market like these male icons. She instead mobilizes resources from publicly funded institutions such as museums and, as in the case of Sound Machine, the Swedish Research Council by way of Linköping University.

Following George E. Marcus and Fred R. Myers,[34] it is possible to argue that artists who, like Esther Shalev-Gerz, seek collaborations and the postmodern male icons have found two very different responses to an increasingly powerful art market. Esther Shalev-Gerz has made herself relatively independent from the commercial side of the art world. Instead she has to handle the tensions, and insecurity, that arise from bringing onboard explorers, technicians and negotiators chosen by her commissioners rather than by her. As we have seen, this might produce discomforts for her, as well as for those who collaborate with her. Her way of working produces a specific version of the dialectic between autonomy and heteronomy in art practices.[35] Even though Shalev-Gerz might be relatively independent from the art market, she is neither independent of the support of institutions, nor autonomous from what Stephen Wright calls "the symbolic economy of recognition".[36] Generally artists act upon the fact that their reputation is based on judgments passed on their works by activities in the art world. Each work of an artist adds

[31] Sherry Irvin, "Appropriation and Authorship in Contemporary Art", *British Journal of Aesthetics*, April 2005, Vol 45 (2), pp. 126-127.
[32] Cf. Irit Rogoff, "Production lines", on Collaborative Art: Conversations on Collaborative Arts practice, Essays, http://collabarts.org/?p=6, accessed February 28 2010. Rogoff here draws upon Roland Barthes', "The Death of the Author".
[33] John Roberts, "Collaboration as a Problem of Art's Cultural Form", *Third Text*, Nov 2004, Vol 18 (6) pp. 557-558.

[34] George E. Marcus & Fred R Myers, op cit. pp. 23-24.
[35] See John Roberts, op cit; Stewart Martin, "Critique of relational aesthetics", *Third Text*, Vol. 21 (4), July, 2007, pp. 369–386
[36] Stephen Wright, "The delicate essence of artistic collaboration", *Third Text*, vol 18(6), Nov 2004, pp. 533-545, p. 534.

to, or subtracts from, an artist's value.[37] As the artist's reputation is the sum of the values assigned to its works, it becomes important to watch over aesthetic and conceptual qualities the way that Esther Shalev-Gerz did when Sound Machine was finalized and made public.

In a sense Sound Machine was produced by a sprawled and temporary studio with Esther Shalev-Gerz at the center. She shifted between the various positions for participation, at various times working as explorer, negotiator, editor and, to a lesser extent, technician. She took full responsibility for the aesthetic and conceptual quality of the work and directed the work of the participants. That is, she took the position of the signature. Sound Machine's participants were spatially dispersed and they entered and left the production at different moments. Esther Shalev-Gerz was present from its conceptualization to its second career on her web page and at Jeu de Paume in Paris. At the end of the production she haled in the outcomes of all interactions and controlled the final editing. During this final phase of the production she clearly prioritized the reception and future careers for Sound Machine over the local context.

Conceptually, Sound Machine plugs into cultural webs on postindustrialism and the memory boom in Western societies. Production wise, the work combines a translocal version of the studio model, as Esther Shalev-Gerz organizes sprawled studios for each new work, the signature style of art and what she herself labels as "participatory art". By referring to her work as participatory and by inviting, for instance, women who worked in textile mills to perform in her works, Esther Shalev-Gerz joins the studio model and the signature-style with the "collaborative" or "social turn" in contemporary art.[38] Without falling into the trap, pointed out by Claire Bishop, of judging the quality of an artwork in its mode of collaboration,[39] it is worth paying attention to the how of participation in Sound Machine. In her mapping of the "collaborative turn", curator Maria Lind distinguishes between single, double and triple collaboration, distinctions which can also be applied to the notion of participation.[40] In single participation, people are invited to take part in a process that has one single author. In double participation, participants co-author the theme of

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[37] Howard Becker, *Art Worlds*, p. 23; pp. 356-357.

[38] Among the key texts on this movement are: Claire Bishop, "The Social Turn: Collaboration and its Discontents", *Art Forum* Feb 2006; Maria Lind, "The Collaborative Turn", in *Taking Matters into Common Hands: On Contemporary Art and Collaborative Practices*, London: Black Dog Publishing, 2007.
[39] Claire Bishop, "The social turn".
[40] Maria Lind, "The Collaborative Turn," pp. 26-27.

the work and all participants have the same status in the realization of the work. Triple participation occurs when participation is the main subject of the work.

Sound Machine is a case of single participation. However, the women who reacted to the sound, as well as the 3D-technician, were absolutely vital to the conceptual core of Sound Machine and its explorations of past-present relationships. In contrast to artists and artist collectives who deploy collaboration in order to critique capitalist forms of production or to address social concerns, Esther Shalev-Gerz here employed participation to develop and explore the themes she set up for Sound Machine. At the same time, collaboration with institutions and negotiators secured the work financially and provided it with direction. In this way, connections between conceptual explorations and production are intricately interwoven in Sound Machine, as they are in other works by Shalev-Gerz. Her signature is there to assure the value of the works. The mode of production associated with her and her works was also a primary reason for inviting her to Norrköping. As suggested by Miwon Kwon in relation to site-specific art, "itinerant artists" and

commissionaires mutually reinforce their symbolic values by such arrangements.[41]

During the course of this essay I have touched upon points of contact between on the one hand the artistic research in Sound Machine and on the other hand experimental psychology and qualitative social and cultural research. There is much more to say about this "almost, but not quite" relationship between a particular instance of artistic inquiry and academic research. For example, both this paper and Sound Machine raise issues about the relationships between authorship and interpretation. Even though I have discussed my experiences of following Sound Machine, and the writing of this report, with numerous colleagues,[42] the text is clearly written in the style of ethnographic authority with one single author. This is a style that allows for a participant observer like me, to, by reference to experience, describe other people's doings.[43] I also decided not to show this text to Esther Shalev-Gerz before publishing it, to keep it outside the work with her signature. Just as the signature style of art has been challenged within the art world,

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[41] Miwon Kwon, "One Place after Another: Notes on Site Specificity", pp. 103-106.

[42] Special thanks to Karin Becker, Kosta Economou, Johanna Lärkner, Ann-Charlotte Gilboa-Runnvik & Marianne Winther-Jörgensen.

[43] James Clifford, *Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, pp. 21-54.

the ethnographic authority style has been questioned within anthropology. Both prevail however. In art, collaborative practices place ethics, rather than aesthetics, at the center of attention. In cultural research, discussions on the politics of representation put issues of power at the heart of representation. Through this rapport in moments of production as well as in practices of consumption, university people and artists, in different ways, have to struggle not only with representation but also with loss of authority and autonomy that comes with collaboration.