VITA HAVET

Whiteness and Otherness - Plaza de Mayo and Konstfack

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Abstract

This text is written as a masterexam within an important Art institution in Stockholm as Konstfack, where the researcher has been studying interior and furniture design for the last five years. Therefore, it is the result of the knowledge accumulated during that period of time, in combination with the socio-cultural baggage that characterizes her identity and positioning towards the world.

There are many ways of defining architecture and design. Also, within the concept of architecture, there are plenty of branches. This study is, as said before, a sum of the interpretation of how to use the education in order to socially contribute to a sustainable and more egalitarian world.

As the writers' background profoundly influences her point of view, it seems essential to exhibit it for the reader. Her parents came to Sweden as political refugees from Chile and Argentina during the military dictatorships that had taken over the democratic governments in those countries during the '70s. They, as well as the researcher, are by definition, either Swedish or "white". Even as born in Sweden and having Swedish citizenship, the law does not define the writer as Swedish. This fact has featured the formation of her identity as "not white," and in that way excluded from the dominating "ethnicity".

Initially, the aim of the study contextualises by the description of the experiences and knowledge that have guided the author through her education at Konstfack.

As a result, there arise perspectives that criticize excluding power structures and how they reproduce through architecture and spatial design. Experiences, reflections, and knowledge that emerged through the described education at Konstfack led further into
the exploration of the concepts inclusive-excluding design, activism, social and political architecture, postcolonial perspectives, and decolonizing processes.

The study's theoretical part presents various practitioners that have inspired and empowered this project. Further, a more in-depth analysis of the institution responsible for the writer's education for the last five years results in unfolding problems and issues to give the reader an understanding of the chosen strategies to follow, starting with "manipulating manipulation".

The fifth chapter consists of the study's method part, where the researcher describes the methods and strategies used. The results are presented based on spatial interventions, used as a tool to activate dialogues about shared spaces, here called common spaces. The reactions caused by the interventions are also a ground for analysis.

Keywords: white supremacy, subversive interventions, disruptive aesthetics, activism, civil disobedience, architecture
**Acknowledgements**

Amiga, hermana, guerrera  
Eres fuerte, pero humilde  
Valiente, independiente y una fuente de inspiración  
Amor de mi vida, eres hermosa  
Amiga, hermana, guerrera  
Super poderosa  

Anamaria Suazo Svahn 2019.04

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2019.05.14
Abstract

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Concept definitions

The Study starts by presenting the concepts used to facilitate the readers understanding of how they are interpreted to ensure a common language for these concepts. Initially, the aim of the study contextualises by the description of the experiences and knowledge that have guided the author through her education at Konstfack.

White supremacy:
A norm that means that it is seen as positive, desirable, and healthy to be white. The fact that a whiteness standard characterizes society means that people who are white have social, economic, and political privileges. It follows that whiteness is a social construction that places people who are counted as white on top of a power hierarchy based on "race". What counts as white has varied with time and space.¹

Person of colour (Poc)
Someone who does not consider themselves to be white.²

Separatism
The advocacy or practice of separation of a particular group of people from a larger body based on ethnicity, religion, or gender.³

¹ Kiros, Judith, 2014
² Cambridge Dictionary ,Person of colour, 2019-04-01
³ Oxford Dictionary, Separatism, 2019-04-01
Brown Island

Brown Island is an interdisciplinary collective of students based at Konstfack, which the author was part of forming three years ago. It is a space that actively embraces the multitude of diasporic, multi-abled sexual and gender identities and voices; it is about the refusal of silence, to recognize rather than tokenize, to claim space as a reminder to others that we are here.  

Intersectionality

An analytical method used to study how different power systems - such as gender, sexuality, class, ethnicity, function variation, and age - interact.

Norm

A norm usually denotes the "normal", often unspoken, acceptable behaviour in a social group. It can be about appearance and clothing as well as actions. Fitting into the norm provides benefits, from everyday situations flowing more efficiently, to pure privileges and power. Similarly, these standards create disadvantages for those who do not fit. It gives rise to discriminatory structures.

Racism

An ideology based on the combination of the following five conditions

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4 Brown Island Handbook was produced the summer and autumn of 2018 as an attempt to make visible some of the recent organizing activity, dialogue, and thinking from POC (People of Colour) voices within Konstfack. It was funded by Konstfack, School of Arts, Crafts and Design. The idea is to distribute the handbook at Konstfack and other art institutions. Published by Brown Island, printed by TMG Tabergs, 2019.
5 Croall Olbers, Moa-Lina, Natur och Kultur, 2018, s .177 Brown Island
6 Nationella Sekretariatet för Genusforskning, Norm, 2019-03-19
1) the perception that it is reasonable to divide the human race into several distinct races based on phenotypic differences (external characteristics);
2) the assumption that there is a connection between on the one hand such phenotypic differences and the other hand inherited mental and intellectual predisposition, behavioural patterns and mood and moral character
3) the assumption that these inherited traits are common to all members of the respective races;
4) the belief that races can be classified into a hierarchy, depending on the quality of the inherited traits;
5) the notion that this hierarchical classification entitles members of supposedly superior races to dominate, exploit and even annihilate members of supposedly inferior races.⁷

**Civil disobedience**

Refusal to obey a law or follow a policy believed to be unjust. Practitioners of civil disobedience usually base their actions on moral right and employ the nonviolent technique of passive resistance to bring more extensive attention to the injustice. Risking punishment, such as violent retaliatory acts or imprisonment, they attempt to bring about changes in the law. In the modern era, civil disobedience has developed as a tool to use in such events as street demonstrations, marches, the occupying of buildings, and strikes and other forms of economic resistance.⁸

**Resistance**

The act of fighting against something that is attacking a person or refusing to accept something.⁹

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⁷ Nationalencyklopedin, *Racism*, 2019-04-05
⁸ Columbia Encyclopedia, *Civil disobedience*, 2019-04-05
The process of taking position as a designer

Konstfack was an unknown institution for the writer, but her preconception was that it was a place with streaming and pioneering ideas where it was possible to think and discuss "outside the box". At the time of the beginning of the education at Konstfack, the author was not entirely conscious of how the mechanisms of the social structures work regarding identity, inclusion, and exclusion. When a few months had passed, she realized that the majority of her fellow students had a similar ethnic, economic and socio-cultural background, which expressed itself in matters of values, aesthetic choices, and forms of interaction.

Homogeneity at the Art Schools is a constitutional issue. The lack of citizen representation and cultural variety determines the creation of art styles and artistic expressions that dominate the arena and does not represent the needs or desires of all. However, what is most problematic, it preserves and reproduces a white Art world.

The latest statistics from Statistiska Centralbyråns shows the following:

<table>
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<th>STUDIENIVÅ och kön, inklusive inresande studenter/utländska doktorander</th>
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Picture 1: Image of statistics from Statistiska Centralbyråns, Svensk och utländsk bakgrund för studenter och doktorander på universitet och högskolor, Universitetskanslersämbetet, 2019-03-27
Chart of the amount of higher studies and phd students depending of their “ethnic” background the last ten years.\textsuperscript{10}

The numbers do not take into account overseas backgrounds. According to Statistics Sweden, about half of the beginners at the country's colleges had parents with a history in Europe, which means that the percentage for students with two foreign-born parents or who are themselves foreign-born should be shared with two to get a more accurate figure for students with a background outside Europe and North America.

The academic year 17/18 86,609 persons studied at Sweden's higher education institutions at a basic or advanced level. Of these, almost 18\% have a foreign background and - as the logic above - about 9\% overseas background. That is, the overwhelming majority of 82\% consisted of people defined as having a "Swedish background".

SCB:s statistics for the academic year 2012/13 show that 86\% of Konstfack’s students had a native-born parent, 14\% two foreign-born parents or are themselves born abroad. Consequently, the proportion of students with overseas or North American background can be estimated to be about 7\%. The parents level of education determines another crucial factor for people's study choices. This fact means that the population group who, for various reasons, previously knows which paths there are to go are favoured, and other groups excluded from the possibilities.

Interior design is the branch of architecture that specializes in everything that happens inside a room. Consequently, its development interlinks with the looks and social functions of buildings throughout history. It is a discipline made of arts-, sociocultural-, political-, economical- and technological studies which express itself depending on the

\textsuperscript{10} Statistiska Centralbyrå, Svensk och utländsk bakgrund för studenter och doktorander på universitet och högskolor, Universitetskanslersämbetet, 2019-05-16
social needs of the community that houses it. Those collective or individual needs might regard physical rooms for everyday purposes, celebrations, education, or public spaces, for example. Current structures, values, declaration of purposes, proportions, and symbols form the aesthetics of those places. People are highly influenced by architecture and interior design, although they are not always aware of that.

That is how it became evident to the researcher that architecture has social functions and are directly related to political or/and social ideals. Therefore, this years at Konstfack have consisted in examining if and in that case how Interior design embraces ideologies which enables and empowers hidden structures of power and where opinions and behaviours are being manipulated through the designs physical modelling.\(^\text{11}\)

**MANIPULATING MANIPULATION**

This part describes the author's involvement in trying to transform the university as a *student of colour* at Konstfack. One way of doing it was forming and being a member of the interdisciplinary student collective Brown Island in the last three years, which also is very important in this context.

Brown Island is a space that actively embraces the multitude of diasporic, multi-abled sexual and gender identities and voices; it is about the refusal of silence, to recognize rather than tokenize, to claim space as a reminder to others that we are here.

\(^{11}\) Eldin, Fredrik, *The Message is the Medium: luffarsäkra bänkar ur ett ideologiskt perspektiv*, s. 2. 2014
The same logo was used in the second exhibition "Brown Island in the White Sea 2.0". Projected and then painted on the wall by several members of Brown Island, 2018

Brown Island Handbook was produced the summer and autumn of 2018 as an attempt to make visible some of the recent organizing activity, dialogue, and thinking from POC (People of Colour) voices within Konstfack. It was funded by Konstfack, School of Arts, Crafts and Design. The handbook is available at Konstfack library and other art institutions. Published by Brown Island, printed by TMG Tabergs, 2019.
Floating in the white sea Making visible

The group was born in autumn 2016, an initiative of former master student Rudy Loewe in Visual communication. It started as a safe place for students of colour at Konstfack that felt the need for meeting each other. There were meetings every second week on Tuesdays, drinking coffee, and getting to know each other. After some weeks, the members got to know of the possibility to form an official student group at the student union to get support and help with money and booking rooms for meetings at the school.

When Brown Island sent the request to the student union, the problems started. The student union at the time was questioning the group’s intentions. The president of the student union expressed provocation by the fact that the group was a separatist space for specific students. The two following month was used to answer emails and discussion with the president of the student union. He questioned the decision of making Brown Island an official student group or not. It was about 200 Swedish crowns, the amount that formal student groups get to buy fika\textsuperscript{12} money for meetings. Brown Island’s members understood that the group’s presence was provoking and got prepared to keep on fighting for its existence. At that time, Brown Island had been working for a few months, but already sad and angry because of all the energy that got lost to fight for its presence to be acknowledged.

Luckily the gathering got help from Konstfacks professors and started receiving the funds from the student union and have ever since continued working without problems with the student union. Of course, the importance of the whole process was not about the money, but of being recognized as a part of the Faculty.

\textsuperscript{12} Fika: Swedish for a coffee break that’s more about socialising than drinking coffee. And something sweet is also welcome.
Picture 4: Image of the artwork of two members in Brown Island, Nachla Libre and Emma Dominguez in the exhibition “Brown Island in the White Sea” at Konstfack. The performative artwork started by the two artists writing “We just want to make art, but are forced to educate white people. But are forced to take responsibility over white people’s anxiety and tears after they insulted us. But are compelled to defend our right to defend ourselves” on one of the white walls in the White sea. The art work then grew with people starting to write different messages, Spring 2017.

Brown Islands first exhibition in Vita Havet was spring 2017, named ”Brown Island in the White Sea”. At the vernissage, plenty of the visitors had never been at Konstfack before. The exhibition opened up for new people, people of colour, to take over the White Sea. Vita Havet transformed that week. Brown Islands presence launched the negotiation of the White Sea. Moreover, it became evident that black and brown people do not usually inhabit this space. Vita Havet’s invisible structures suddenly became visible.
The collective was interviewed by Stockholm Direkt, a newspaper that is delivered to all Stockholm inhabitants every Tuesday and ended up fronting on the cover.

Picture 5: Image to the left: Cover page of Söderort Direkt with the text "Konstfack is so incredibly white - the separatist group Brown Island have had enough of the whiteness and alignment at the art institution." Interview: Ebba Rosencrantz. Photo: Maja Brand, 2017-08

Picture 6: Image to the right: Image of the article where three of the members got interviewed by Ebba Rosencrantz at Söderort Direkt for the exhibition that was taking place at the White Sea the 21st of February to the 26th February 2017. The picture taken for the article is showing part of Emma Domiguez and Nachla Libres artwork and Alejandro Montero Bravo (MFA Fine art), Fernando Caceres (MFA Fine art) and Cassandra Lorca Macchiavelli (BA Interior architecture) in front of it. Photo: Maja Brand, 2017-08
Brown Island was for the first time officially recognized and taking space at the institution, but it was not without meeting aggression from students and staff. Even some members got exposed with pictures and full names at the fascist website Nordfront, where there were named "Rasfrämlingar criticizing Konstfack for being White." An anonymous poster showed up at the pinboard placed on the entrance, calling the students for a racist manifestation with starting point outside of Konstfack. The note stayed for a couple of days before Brown Island saw it and wrote to the Vice-chancellor. That day, Konstfack got closed for all students for safety reasons. Some weeks later, one of Brown Island members held an open lecture about their artistic practice, and Konstfack had to hire a security guard for safety reasons. It was a turbulent time for Brown Island.

Picture 7: Image from Nordfront’s website.13

The same picture taken by Maja Brand was then stolen and published at Nordfront’s website. Three of the members of Brown Island got exposed with pictures of their faces and full names. Comments on the website from different members of Nordfront threatening both Konstfack and the members. After some days the comment page was no longer available on Nordfront’s website. Published 2017-03-01.
Theories and knowledge about architecture as a tool for social activism

There are many ways to stop injustice, close or far away. Defend human rights, organize name petitions, or demonstrate. Rebels have always used their voices to show what it is worth fighting for. Also, in many cases, they have succeeded. Architecture is an essential pillar in the construction of societies. One can support rebellious actions, challenge injustice, and show other ways of interacting in the city with space making actions. There are many practising architects around the world working on political and social issues.

From the author's point of view, it is inevitable to see the interior designer's role, regardless of the practitioner's ideology, as a political practice.

The project begins with research about civil disobedience and resistance in public space and searching for references in the field of architecture and design working with these concepts, to examine the influential role of architecture and design in movements for social change. One of the main questions that perfuse this study is how political activism can drive a wealth of design ingenuity and collective creativity that defy standards of art and design. A good example is the work of Arquitectura popular em Portugal, where eighteen Portuguese architects got commissioned by the fascist regime to find the national architectural characteristics after the second world war to document the Portuguese architecture.

At this time, all cultural workers in the country had to adapt their expressions to fit the fascist ideology.

From 1955 to 1961, the team of architects covered a total of 50,000 kilometres for the sake of the Inquiry, "by car, or scooter, on horseback or on foot", to document Portugal's vernacular architecture, returning to compile and edit their 10,000 photographs and accompanying material into a summary volume published in 1961 as 'Arquitectura
Popular em Portugal’. The architects worked in regional teams, with one ‘lead’ architect and two assistants, and each region was allowed to follow its methodology.\textsuperscript{14}

The result of this survey ended unexpectedly, undermining the fascistic aim.

Interesting with these kinds of practices and references is how architects can operate and put other values and strategies in their practices. In this case, it was a way to survive as an architect in the regime. One was not allowed to have analytical expressions, but one was allowed to dig. So what the team developed was documentation of Portuguese architecture that no one earlier had seen.

It is all about finding strategies within the system.

An example of how the academic world has incorporated similar strategies into its institutions consists of Forensic architecture (FA). FA is a research agency based at the Goldsmith University of London. The agency undertakes advanced spatial and media investigations into cases of human rights violations, with and on behalf of communities affected by political violence, human rights organizations, international prosecutors, environmental justice groups and media organizations. The term Forensic architecture comes from the emergent academic developed at The Goldsmiths. It refers to the production and presentation of architectural evidence relating to buildings, and urban environments within legal and political processes.

FA investigate state and corporate violence, human rights violations, and environmental destruction all over the world. Their work involves open-source investigations, the construction of digital and physical models, 3D animations, virtual reality environments, and cartographic platforms. Within those environments, they locate and analyze photographs, video, audio files, and testimonies to reconstruct and analyze violent

events. They also use their digital models as tools for interviewing survivors violence, finding new ways to access and explore memories of trauma.\textsuperscript{15}

This practice brings a "foreign" reality into the academy; the fact that the predominant proportion of students have only seen on film or at best read about in newspapers or books and contributes to deconstruct the making of the familiar.

Another essential and very inspiring reference is Herkes İçin Mimarlık Derneği – HiM (Architecture for All Association), (2011, İstanbul). HiM is a platform where student volunteers and professionals come together to bring social problems encountered in the country and the world in a creative way to the agenda, raise awareness about issues and act to produce solutions from the fields of architecture and design. In urban and rural areas, it wants to contribute to the formation of an architecture field, which works for and with the society, by encouraging participatory mechanisms that are lacking in the design, planning and construction processes of projects.

The goal of the platform is to set examples for an architecture that takes care of community benefit. To discuss and produce alternatives in the production of architecture and encouraging architectural actors to take initiatives to solve social problems and evaluating the architectural and social potentials that exist in the work field to meet today's needs.

One example of their practice is when thousands of citizens took to the streets to join one of Turkey's most massive anti-government demonstrations in decades. The occupation of Taksim square 27 May 2013 – 20 August 2013. A team of Turkish

\textsuperscript{15} Forensic Architecture (FA) Forensic Architecture was established in 2010 with the help of a European Research Council (ERC) grant given to Professor Eyal Weizman. The team began to engage in case work and investigations while developing their research culture through a series of seminars at the Centre for Research Architecture at Goldsmiths, University of London. 2019-04-10. The website constantly change its content and projects. The autour took inspiration of projects on the website during the spring 2019.
architects initiated an archive of photographs and drawings documenting the makeshift shelters, tents, and other temporary structures that had been constructed on the site and during the occupation.16

An activist and architect working with these questions are Santiago Cirugeda. His practice is born of the frustration that, as an artist or an architect, it is quite easy to transform space, but as a citizen in western societies, it is almost impossible to take action to improve shared environments. Cirugeda uses the title of the architect to empower citizens to act in their local space, trying to facilitate community building by subvert laws, regulations, and conventions. Guidelines and instructions are set out by Cirugeda for the citizens to use when building, displaying or creating space by the citizens initiative.

His practice also investigates possibilities for action, appropriation, occupation, and use. One of his projects is Recetas Urbanas or Urban Prescriptions, where he offers an open-source toolkit to be used to make cheap architecture, available to all. Another project of Cirugeda is Detournement, where he used loopholes in public laws and regulations to create interventionist tactics for stealing and turning everyday objects into tools which people can use to build temporary spatial installations of their wishes and desires.

The effect of his practice is an excellent example of how an activist with the architect’s tools can open up for opportunities of changing the urban space outside the rigorous framework of the society, using strategies not for breaking, but bending the law.

FIELD STUDY AND DOCUMENTATION -
ARCHITECTURE AS A TOOL FOR STEERING IDEOLOGY

Early in the project with research about civil disobedience and resistance, the writer made a trip to Buenos Aires to visit the most typical and politically charged square in Argentina. It is a platform for thousands of movements throughout history. It is also a symbol of the activism that brought her own family into exile in Sweden.

Internationally, the square is known for hosting the hundreds of mothers who every Thursday for nearly 40 years have demonstrated to demand a response from the government to what has happened to their "missing children during the military dictatorships, mainly the one which began in 1976 and resulted in over 30 000 people disappeared.

The typical Spanish square, located outside the government - La Casa Rosada. Plaza de Mayo is a legacy to the Greek agora and Romans square. It is a place given to the citizens for social activity and meetings, surrounded by buildings and symbols of the nation's greatness.

There have been many reforms in the square over the years, but the most notable are those made after the economic crisis in Argentina 2001. On 20 December 2001, the Argentinean people filled the streets, marked by hunger, misery, and exclusion causes the collapse of the then neoliberal government. The police repression against those who were in the square produced 39 murders that have not yet received justice, despite the brutal, proved killing of the repressive state apparatus. The square transforms by making it harder for the people to evacuate when there are confrontations with the police.

What the reforms communicate is a joint development at many squares around the world. Governments indirectly communicate that people's voices do not count in the
democratic process. Opinions that express themselves at streets and squares do not change what happens on a national level. At the same time, states use public spaces for meetings to segment architectonic objects to prevent people from gathering and organizing, which also communicate contradictions. People's voices and organizations on the streets and squares always have threatened the government's and will continue doing so in the future.

The public space is not a treat itself. Like Stavros Stavrides presents is his book Common Space, the concept of the commons is different from that of the public. The state apparatus mediates the existence of the public, whereas the common exist beyond the state institutions. The public space is a space given to the people, whereas the interaction creates a common space among the people. Public space can exist without people. Common space only exists if people are consistently producing it.

The study of Plaza de Mayo generated the tools to analyze Konstack. Vita Havet is, within the Institution, a public space given to the students, and what happens there is, (in the best cases) a result of the work on a common space.

The grounding of Brown Island was as a need to create a space where people of colour could feel included and not dominated by a "norm(ative)al" way of behaving and creating, it met resistance from official sectors, as it exposed in the chapter "Floating in the white sea Making visible" below. This fact, in combination with the authors cultural and political luggage, created the need for raising the voice against an experienced undemocratic and unjust environment to "survive" as a non-white student. Moreover, as an interior designer, it was natural to analyze the use of Konstfack`s most emblematic space: Vita Havet - The White Sea.
Vita Havet is the first space the visitor meets entering Konstfack. It is the main exhibition space where students currently under the year present their works.

Vita Havet appears obvious; the vast empty space with towering white walls and the sky through the vaulted windows above renders its name transparent, rational, maybe even natural.\(^{17}\)

Vita Havet is an emotionally charged space to most of Konstfacks students. The education teaches students to behave in a certain way regarding space. They learn that the White Sea is a place ruled by the jungle's law, where the most significant and influential ones are those who gain access to it, and the rest have to blame themselves. The fact that one of Sweden's most distinguished universities of Arts does not work critically on the conventions applied to the White Sea is highly problematic, since when the graduates leave this academic bubble and go from this "safe" white walls into a society where our shared spaces must be negotiated, they have not gathered tools for collective work.

To have a formation that reflects the current world would be suitable for the practices to take place among everything else that reflects society. There is where art can grow and challenge. Instead, Konstfack creates individualistic artists to be completely independent, lacking the purpose of sharing ideas and techniques with other students. That is why the question of negotiating space is a current issue.

Accessibility and negotiation of space

In October 2018 Brown Island exhibits in Vita Havet. "Floating in the White Sea" was a foray into the contemporary Art Institution where the collective used the space and the exhibition as a tool to start a dialogue about Vita Havet as the name and space itself. The following is part of the exhibited text that two members of Brown Island wrote:

On the surface, Vita Havet appears obvious; the vast, naked space with towering white walls and the sky through the arched windows above renders its name transparent, rational, maybe even natural. As an art space, the name immediately invokes idealized visions of untouched landscapes or the unbounded promise of a blank canvas or a blank piece of paper, an infinitely young blank which emphasizes the Beginning, as yet "unborn, a naked presence full of possibility." Within the art institution, however, the silence and austerity of Vita Havet imbue its white, smooth surfaces with an assumed neutral, aesthetic purity that may not be as innocent as one might believe.

Vita Havet emerges out of a modernist tradition. Traumas of contemporary western history that lingers within its smooth surfaces. If "aesthetics is in the modern sense itself already an anaesthetic" that removes feelings and "calms the nerves", as Beatriz Colomina writes, then this anaesthetic does not merely suppress bodily sensations but facilitates the control and even the silencing of feelings. Any perceived friction is smoothed out, depriving the inhabitants of leaving any traces, thus, memory.

After every exhibition where a student claims space and voice, Vita Havet is returned to its white, resting state. Of course, as a continuously rotating exhibition space, Vita Havet needs to be maintained and easily adaptable, which, however, does not negate that the act of constant whitewashing performs as the ultimate anaesthetic, a continuous process of sterilization that communicates the endless need for silence and order.
What enunciations are privileged or undermined by a sea of white that demands order and smoothness? What expectations implicitly imposes those who inhabit such a space, one that makes some bodies feel "uncomfortable, exposed, visible, different?"

At the beginning of the Brown Islands investigation, active members sent a letter to the school’s direction, making a case regarding a changing of the name of Vita Havet. The requesters felt that the linguistic symbolism should not be taken lightly, as the name frames meaning for what happens within. Currently, the denomination presents opportunities and a platform for critique, important as a method for articulating inadequacies, shortcomings, and gaps, and an entry point to negotiate practices that seeks other ways. Changing the name could be one such practice, as it would directly engage a process that questions institutional procedures and values, revealing who has a voice, which positions have power, and the possibilities and politics of representation. However, this alone will not resolve the discussed issues. Attention must also call to what sits behind the name, the invisible structures that maintain the institutional status quo, and the histories and voices left out.

In the early 20th century as industrialization and mass production proliferated throughout Europe and the United States, ideas began to spread which proclaimed ornament to be not only in bad taste but a disease, a retrograde step, a crime that "inflicts serious injury on people’s health, on the national budget and hence on cultural evolution". Artists and architects applied models from and the language of philosophers, medical doctors, and psychologists, adopting the logic of affliction and disease to validate their claims. This rhetoric helped shape fundamental modernist thinking, still intact today, which describes and villainizes everything and everyone who stand out as stains, as "dirt" in need of cleaning and purification. Modernism’s ambitions to reshape and make new environments, and thus the world, was simultaneously a project that quarantined and removed that which was seen to hold back progress. The elimination of that considered out of place was seen as "a positive effort to organize the environment," which encouraged support for eugenic and race biology practices and furthered the othering of non-normative bodies.

The white cube is a gallery space with white walls, smooth floors, little to no furniture, the ceiling as the source of light; it attempts to deprive the senses of everything except for the work itself, leaving the art free "to take on its own life." Vita Havet is an embodiment of this practice; it is a White Cube, a "bourgeois ivory tower of high culture that produces a space where both objects and subjects are "sanitized, sequestered, cut off from "reality" With each new coat of paint the everyday experience of walking its halls from the voices beneath every painted-over layer.
The world made "white" through colonialism, and repetitive acts of oppression make its surfaces a mould where some bodies fit better than others. Konstfack, along with other art institutions have, as Sara Ahmed would explain, become orientated 'around' whiteness as they have acquired the 'skin of the bodies that have inhabited them through history.'

Picture 8: Photograph from the exhibition “Floating in the White Sea - A foray into the Contemporary Art Institutions” 15-21 October 2018 where Brown Island used the white walls of the White Sea to project a text written by Johnny Chang and Louise Khadjeh-Nassiri, two members of Brown Island. The whole text is published in the Brown Island Handbook. Photograph: Cassandra Lorca Macchiavelli

The action plan - The institutional respond to activated dialogues

A few days after the arrival from Buenos Aires, all of Konstfack students received an email from the perfect for the department of Design, Interior Architecture and Visual Communication. The email informed the students that the vice-chancellor was setting up a working group with teachers and student representatives from different departments to new ways to use the room/place Vita Havet.

The email also had an attachment containing notes of the discussions that had taken place at the Board of Education and Research, UFN. The document constitutes action plans formulated as an answer to the dialogue activated by Brown Island.

The text has an undertone of wanting to "solve" a problem that gives Konstfack a lousy reputation. The solution is to act as quickly as possible through working groups with a few representatives who will try to re-textualize the White Sea as space and the activities that take or not take place there. The document also proposes the formation of a working group for the name change. The estimated time for this "project" is a few months. Thus, there is an apparent intention of, when Konstfack opens up after the summer break in September, new students are going to meet a White Sea that is no longer to be called The White Sea.

One paragraph of the action plan presents Konstfack´s metaphorical images for pedagogy and education. The images represent the Forest and the Tivoli, and a new addition suggests the square as a place for trading, activism, party, protest, parade, speakers corner, passage, and meetings.

This study questions the institution aiming to apply a global, very politically loaded concept into Vita Havet: The Square. Currently, Vita Havet is not even in one sense used as a square, with any of the activities mentioned above. They are, de facto, not yet
possible to happen because of the booking system’s functioning, which makes certain students the owners of Vita Havet week in and week out during the whole year.

Universities often describe their missions by drawing on the languages of diversity as well as equality. However, denominations do not translate into creating diverse or equal environments. This "no translation" is something we experience: it is the gap between a symbolic commitment and lived reality. Making commitments does not necessarily bring anything about. Indeed, equality and diversity can be used as masks to create the appearance of transformation. Students need to challenge this appearance.¹⁹

The democratic process sometimes has to go beyond the framework of the institution to make space for real changes. This need made the writer direct her project into Vita Havet, applying an earlier research about the square as a platform for political and activistic actions, exploring and challenging the tools of the architect to address problems and discussions at Konstfack, an institution with strong links and symbolism to the White Sea as a space and career of white supremacy.

ISSUES AND GOALS

This study aims to investigate in which way interior architecture contributes to creating, strengthening, or reproducing invisible power structures. The approach is to start from the symbolic and politically charged Plaza de Mayo square in Buenos Aires to make the structures in question visible. Then it is examined whether the reasoning can be applied to analyze the power structures on the art field, and in that case, make evident how they express in reality.

¹⁹ Ahmed, Sara, 2017, Living a Feminist life, s. 89
Methods and strategies

Observations made the study of Plaza de Mayo, an interview with the Argentinean architect Mauricio Corbalan (2019-01-15) who was part of forming m7red 2005, an independent research and activism group focused on the collective description and translation of complex urban scenarios in Buenos Aires. Also, the transformation of pictures taken at the site and plans into drawings.

Regarding the analysis of the use of Vita Havet, the method used is a quantitative survey of the institutions booking system to understand if any group of students had more or less access to show their work or to use the space. The empiricism gained by the work, the ideas and experience with Brown Island, are also a considerable ground for the studies starting point and gives shape to the chosen methodology.

Spraying phrases all-around Vita Havet and the intervention of its floor represented the study architecturally. A film, shown during Konstfack’s Vårutställning 2019 documented the whole process. A diary documents the interventions and conclusions of the reactions are embedded under this chapter.

Reactions to the interventions

Because of the nature of the diary, in this part, the researcher temporarily abandons the rules for academic writing and describes the events as experienced in first person. It was documented during the interventions on The White Sea.
Tuesday the 26 of February
17.30
The receptionists leave Konstfack after a day's work. Teacher, principal, and most of the students end the day and leaves school.
Remaining are the students that make use of the resources that the school offers.
It is quiet. Within, all closed doors and kitchens, students hang with each other and work on their projects.
I take out the filling and start my work shift. My workplace for the night is the White Sea.
The floor is full of cracks, and they must be filled but not with the same intention as the usual filling has. These cracks should be taken care of, appear instead of hidden.

The intervention takes care of the cracks, gives them some love but also makes them visible so that everyone who goes past this room will see them. The institution is leaking. The upholding structure is leaking, and the cracks will make us doubt about its architecture.

In the White Sea at the time of the filling work, there is an exhibition of two students at MasterArt. Both are aware of my project. One is a friend of mine and allied regarding the questioning of the White Sea. The person was with me during the evening when I was working on the putty; the other person also exhibits. I have mentioned that I should start restoring, and they had answered: "Oh, how fun." Since there were no more questions, I did not say any more. At one point, one person comes down with a tripod and a camera, after which I ask; "Is it ok that I am filling here, did not think that you might want to document your works before I start filling the floor?" Then YY responds that it does not disturb at all.
At 9 pm, I have finished my work session and stand with a friend and one person who has your works displayed in the white sea. We drink wine, laugh, and go home.
Wednesday February 27th

The two people who exhibit from the Art Faculty come into my studio. They want to talk to me. They say they did not understand what I was doing yesterday and that they arrived this morning and felt that it did not feel right.

The next day, XX and YY come to my studio and want to talk to me. I ask YY what changed since last night when she saw what I was doing and was there when I went for the day. They explained that the pink cracks do not align with the aesthetics of their artwork and that they interfere with the work.

I notice that they were provoked as if I had violated their space. They mentioned the booking system several times and leaned back to its regulations. I explained that the goal of the intervention was to challenge how the booking system works.

I pointed out to my colleagues that their reactions embodied the school’s structures and hierarchies that we had agreed to make awareness about. YY responded that they could not be responsible for the structures at school. They are just students. I said that they are responsible for it and that their way of handling the situation is reproducing the structures of power as soon as they enter my studio and asks me to wait until Sunday (when they are going to take down their exhibition).

Both express that they think my project was exciting and that it was great that I did what I did, but they still asked me to wait until Sunday to continue with the interventions. The problem is that each Sunday, the next art student takes over the white sea.
YY said they were "forced" to polish the floor after my "work". They also said that they had booked a professional photographer, that the photographs were intended to applications for scholarships and commissions.

I do try to understand, but since I do not agree with the work of the individual artist, it is difficult. I do not understand the difference between the filler in the cracks and all the colour spots found everywhere on the floor.

I get the feeling that it is more about narcissism, the individual artist, and his art. Nothing gets disturbed. The structures are embodied, and the power reproduced.

I took it very personally because YY was a friend. We shared not only ideology but also values. I had expected reactions from elsewhere but not from an ally, one who understands where I come from, who agree with me in theory but went against my project in practice.
It is also interesting to reflect on it. Around dynamics and movements (power) and when it happens.
RESULTS AND REFLECTIONS

Designing

From analytical tools to narrative methods

One of the methods is to use drawings for representation to explore how the transformation of information from photography to drawing expresses when the spectator meets it. The strategy aims to study if the spectator experiences any difference facing an image vs drawing taken of an activistic action or situation compared to meeting an architectural plan, and in that case how the perception of the work or situation changes.

Nowadays, eyes are used to a constant flow of information in social media. Information about the outside world comes through Facebook, Instagram, and a daily scrolling of pictures. In less than half a second -the usual scrolling time- only a small amount of information remains in the brain, but it happens so fast that there usually are no reactions to the images passing by. How can one of the tools of the architect, the drawing, challenge that problem?

Architectural drawings are technical and hard to understand for the majority of people. So for natural reasons, it is more difficult to make social movements, and picture needs through technical drawings. The sketch includes other possibilities; it invokes and portrays humanity.

Making drawings of plans and photos of Plaza de Mayo and observing the reactions of the spectators made it easier to connect its different looks, depending on the actual political agenda, to the social issues that were at stake at the different times.
Picture 9: Early in the project the trip to Argentina, Buenos Aires inspired the Drawing of the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo, Handmade drawing, A2 format, developed digitally, Cassandra Lorca Macchiaveli, 2018

Picture 10: Drawing of Plaza de Mayo, Buenos Aires, Handmade drawing, A2 format, developed digitally, Cassandra Lorca Macchiaveli, 2018
The process of drawings started early, during the documentation of Plaza de Mayo. Later, once in Stockholm, the exploration of how other architects use drawings to document activistic actions led the study to the references and inspirations described in the theoretical part. The process resulted in the testing and development of narrative tools for studying spaces such as the mentioned methods for gathering specific knowledge about a room and the interaction with people within the room. Unlike other analytical ways of working, the method requires an integrated commitment with spaces, contexts, and actors. Another result is finding a suitable way to exhibit mappings of processes and to generate suggestions for change. In this perspective, the study relates to the aesthetics of political art, or the barricades aesthetic, which is a way of resistance, where the invisible suddenly becomes visible.
Picture 12-15: Representations of the White Sea exploring methods of the architect, in this case the drawing tool, to communicate, document and represent space. Using the handmade drawing tool to explore contrast and highlight (un)hidden structures. Handmade drawing, A2 format, Cassandra Lorca Macchiavelli, 2018
Subversive (?) Restauration

The interventions explore and act as tools to get a closer understanding of Vita Havet, to interact and intervene with space and its inhabitants. They have gradually forced the interior designer closer to major power factors in movement. They were an excuse to dare to challenge Konstfacks heart, and a way to make a statement about the space.

To re-exualise space, to make power structures visible, the designer took the role of "Restorer of the White Sea". The designation was a conscious strategy to have the strength to implement the plan, working evenings and nights when the institution often is empty, as a way of avoiding personal attacks and other likely reactions from the Restauration. The first steps were socializing with the room and filling the cracks in the floor. Then, the fillings became pink, breaking the dominating whiteness.
The institution is sippering, showing some of the filled cracks that one find in the floor of the White Sea. Filled by Cassandra Lorca Macchiavelli during the thesis project, spring 2019.

Picture 16-20: Images of the intervention *The institution is sippering*, showing some of the filled cracks that one find in the floor of the White Sea. Filled by Cassandra Lorca Macchiavelli during the thesis project, spring 2019.
Layers of White

After the restoration of the floor in the White Sea and the growing resistance that the project met, the white walls began to call for attention. Since whatever that broke the white paint on the walls would be overpainted in hours, the next step was to find resisting strategies, to find a way for messages to stay at the white walls just like the cracks in the floor. Since all the walls on the whole Konstfack are in the same white shade, a wall inside the studio got the role as test-wall, where text and messages that say something about the current architecture and power structures, linked to each other, little by little emerged. With this process, further exploration of the room began. Drawings of the White Sea’s walls, pillars and beams with CAD, to be able to start working with scale of text and shape the messages along with the architecture, came naturally.

To build the phrase’s templates, cutting stencils with laser and try out different colours was the next step. The tests consisted in transparent UV paint, different texture paint and many different shades of white, with high and low gloss and looked how the texts looked in different lights and also from how the phrases were more or less visible from different points and distances. The goal of this exploration was to find a way to keep the messages as long as possible on the walls of Vita Havet.

After several tests, an unbroken white shade of spray paint seemed most appropriate for breaking off the Stockholm-white shade of the walls. The messages would be as subtle as possible, on the verge of not appearing but still creating a change that is impossible to miss.

A laser-cut alphabet became one of the tools to start writing white messages on the walls. Now, it was time to plan the interventions that later occurred for several weeks during many nights at Konstfack.
Konstfack Spring Exhibition 2019

Every two years, one or several persons are chosen to act as the curators of the event. This year, Emily Fahlén and Asrin Haidari had the task to exhibit around 180 students’ works, and they suggested to put the work here described at the very entrance of the show. The designated place constitutes a passage from the outside world into Vita Havet, so it was necessary to examine how to use it strategically. One possibility was to use the light sign "KONSTFACK". The first action was to mail the curators and property administrators to take away the hallmark and instead of it spray a sign with the text "Konstfack, det vita havet". Shortly, the answer came: it was not possible to do that.

The answer was fortunate because it forced the project to keep struggling in the same spirit as during the whole process, namely to continue respecting given structures and rules, but searching for ways to distort them. Here again, the method for doing it was by appropriating the aesthetics of the given space to "fool" the visitors, to force them to...
look twice to discover a title that usually is not there and activate their critical glance. A closer study of the characteristics of the sign and typography resulted in the decision to use the same font, colours and form and put the additional text VITA HAVET as a metaphorical comment to the ongoing discussion of a probable renaming of the room. A change of name does not solve the problem of exclusion and white supremacy that the use of the space comprises. The problems have roots in Konstfack as the carrier of a culture that embraces them.

Picture 24: Handmade sketch of idea how to use the space where the work was going to be exhibited. Developed digitally, Cassandra Lorca Macchiavelli, spring 2019.

Picture 25-26 - Pictures showing the final result of the space. Big cracks were filled with white filling. An addition to the KONSTFACK sign (which is always there) was placed just under and together they are read as KONSTFACK VITA HAVET. Two screens showing the process of the project and a bench. The chosen aesthetics was a strategy to melt in, creating doubts and questioning the sender.
Conclusions

In this experience, the findings of the study are that:

Interior architecture creates, strengthens and reproduces invisible power structures in many ways, as shown in the chapter Field Study and documentation: Architecture as a tool for steering ideology. In the case of Konstfack, it is expressed by how the booking system is accessed by the students, resulting in the exclusion of certain groups and the dominance of other groups. Furthermore, the aesthetics related to whiteness forms the student’s creative processes to reproduce and defend the same culture, as shown in the chapter Reactions.

Through the restoration, the White Sea activated. The cracks in the floor can be seen as a design of Brown Island, by the vast minority of people of colour who for social, political and economic reasons do not have access to Konstfack's education. Like the pink cracks are perceived as disturbing, though, not in the "right place" and too visible, those who are not defined according to the norm, in this case, feel like white people with all that it means in terms of aesthetic expression. The cracks have always existed, but now they are pink and visible. There are talks about the cracks with the cleaners, and the floors scraped in the dirt are polished extra hard. However, the cracks are here to stay.

Like the mothers at Plaza de Mayo. For forty years they have, without words, demonstrated their grief and anger, every Thursday in watch and shed. The responsible never told where their child's broken bodies are, but their activism has created international empathy and national struggle for justice. So now, when Las Madres begins to go away, there are the next generations who have created similar movements.
Even knowing that no changes are going to take place, the act is still vital for history. To always fight, and let the fighting be there. That is also resistance.

During the months *The Cracks* have been in the white sea, they have meant that students have, among other things, tried to get the cleaners at Konstfack to clean them. Scraping and harder polishing have been attempting to remove the filler. The pink cracks have been provocative because Konstfack's students are the faithful institutions' regulations, which says that the person who has booked the White Sea in the booking system OWN IT. One consequence of the rules is that the students then need to get the room in its original state.

The white seafloor is always full of cracks, tape, glue, colour. However, the pink cracks created many (often adverse) reactions that I have not seen before.

The problem that arises with statements that define whiteness as invisible is that one is unable to locate and understand the structures of whiteness and furthermore unable to dismantle the privilege and system that exist. By using narrative tools instead of analytical ones, it is possible to approach a phenomenon that impossible to see without interacting with the people that embodies the spaces. The idea of reconceiving public vs common in modern age discussed here also represents this paradox.

An appeal for a new understanding of common space is not only something that can be governed and open to all, but as an essential aspect of the world that expresses, encourages, and exemplifies new forms of social relations and shared experience. A global examination of social housing, self build urban settlements, street peddlers, and public art and graffiti, create these spaces, revealing the hidden emancipatory potential within urban worlds.
Finally, it is necessary to reconnect to the concept of intersectionality. As the reader probably has noticed, the term is scarcely mentioned in the text, but it is implicit and continuous throughout the researcher's analysis. The concept was created from an academic need for the feminist movement to explain and claim the needs of people of colour in the northern geopolitical globe, but has later expanded and should acts here as another fighting social space. As a person of colour, regarded as an immigrant although Sweden is the nation where the writer is born, where all her life has been going on, and of course, as a woman, this is a field that describes the world she inhabits. The sections that conform to intersectional studies cannot exist without the influence of each other. They are not just theoretical constructions, but actual practices. This fusion between women's and peoples' rights, individual and collective rights, multi-abled sexual and gender identities and voices, the history of Plaza de Mayo and the writer's history at Konstfack are forever going to be parts of her gaze towards the world.

Picture 27-31: Pictures of the intervention Layers of White, “The really dangerous white supremacy”. Intervention made during night, Cassandra Lorca Macchiavelli and Anamaria Suazo Swahn, spring 2019
“Do you reproduce?”

“The institution is leaking”
“This structure is in need of deconstruction”

“Violent silence”
AFTER EFFECTS

The 2th of June 2019 the thesis project was awarded Konstfacks biggest and most important award, the Stawenoska stipend and a stipend from the Department of Interior Architecture and Furniture Design for a successful master thesis project. The effects of the project have been very positive. With that said I also want to highlight that Brown Island is a very big part of this important work and changes we have, and are doing at the institution.

A working group together with professors, teachers and students, including external experts, me, Johnny Chang and Emma Dominguez (all part of Brown Island) has been formed.

The group is financed by Konstfack and we are for the first time paid for the work and effort we are doing to make the institution a better place.

Through space the aim is continue to highlight and address the problems and issues that has arisen thanks to Brown Island and this project.
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