

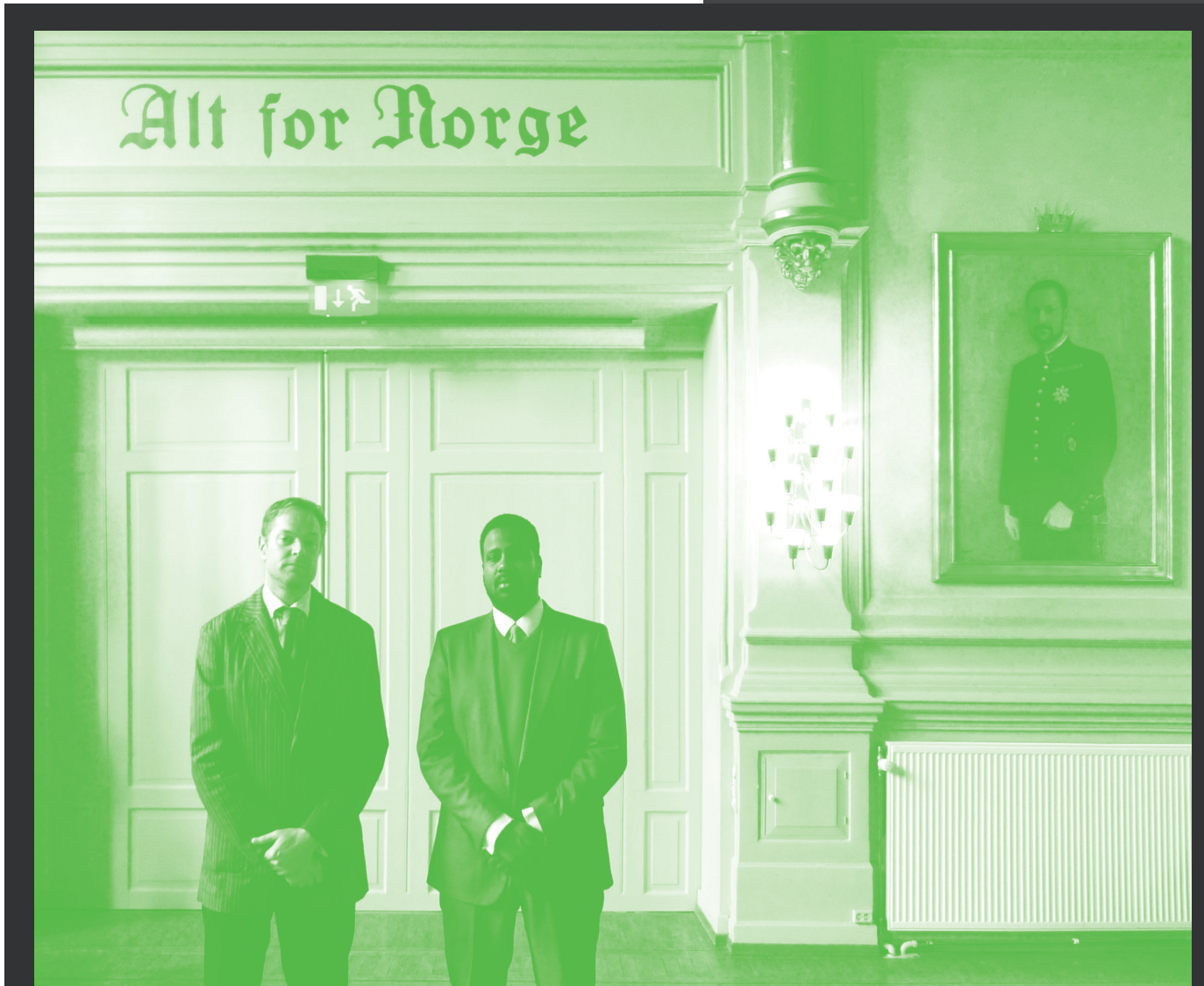
EUROPEAN ATTRACTION LIMITED

—THE CONFERENCE

14.02.2013 —
15.02.2013

AT OSLOS MILITÆRE
SAMFUND

EUROPEAN ATTRACTION LIMITED



A PROJECT BY **FADLABI** AND **LARS CUZNER**



Fadlabi

Fadlabi's work can be seen as an investigation that takes the form of paintings, performance and text. He is the founder of One Night Only gallery in Oslo (2008), which is possibly Norway's most active gallery. Where a new artist is shown every Monday for the last four years. Fadlabi Showed at The Museum of contemporary art Oslo (2012), The national gallery Oslo (2007), Kunsthall Oslo (2011), Kunstnerforbundet Oslo (2011), UKS Oslo (2010), The city hall Oslo (2009), Kunst Station Kleinsassen (2006), Cima Norma Dangio (2010), Iava kulturhuset Stockholm (2009) and many other solo and group shows in different parts of Europe and Sudan. In 2013 he will be participating in the Sharjah Biennial 11 curated by Yuko Hasegawa and he will have a solo show at Kunstplass 5 in Oslo.



Lars Cuzner

Lars is interested in the various possible tensions between radical thought and action. In 2010 for one year Lars Cuzner offered fully confidential, one-to-one conversations at UKS art space, Oslo, where six participants signed up for conversations once a week for the full year. At the moment Lars is researching the Neue Rechte movement and a set of feelings which form the nationalist or the 'tolerant Scandinavian' image through the project European Attraction Limited. At the same time, he is involved in a Christian sect where he is learning how to preach. Most recently exhibiting at Kim Contemporary Art Centre Riga, The Brucennial 2012 New York, Based in Berlin Berlin.

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CONFERENCE PROGRAM

Day 1, Thursday, Feb 14

09:30	Doors open	
10:00	Introduction by Fadlabi And Lars Cuzner	
10:10	Welcome by Moderator Natalie Hope O'Donnell	19
10:15	Salah Hassan <i>The Darkest Africa Syndrome: the Idea of Africa and its (Re)presentation (30 min video)</i>	16
11:00	Will Bradley <i>The Revolution Performed by the Workers Themselves</i>	13
12:00	Lunch <i>Light refreshments</i>	
12:45	Elvira Dyangagani Ose <i>Historical Reenactment (5 min video)</i>	20
12:50	Rikke Andreassen <i>Human Exhibitions. Race, Gender and Sexuality at the Turn of the Century</i>	14
13:50	Tejumola Olaniyan <i>The Misconception of Modernity (5 min video)</i>	20
13:55	Bambi Ceuppens <i>Whose Museum is it Anyway?</i>	12
14:55	Coffee break	
15:05	Walid al-Kubaisi <i>Racism Embedded In The System (15 min video)</i>	15
15:20	Discussion	
16:00	End of Day 1	

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

Day 2, Friday, Feb 15

09:30	Doors open	
10:00	Welcome by Moderator Natalie Hope O'Donnell	19
10:05	Geir Haraldseth <i>The Terrible Beauty of Hindsight</i>	11
11:05	Sandy Prita Meier <i>The Imaginary Other (5 min video)</i>	20
11:10	Tobias Hübinette <i>Contemporary Racial Stereotypes in the Nordic Countries</i>	17
12:10	Lunch <i>Light refreshments</i>	
13:10	Susan Buck-Morss <i>History as a Gift (7 min video)</i>	20
13:20	Nina Witoszek <i>The Origins of the 'Regime of Goodness'</i>	18
14:20	Coffee break	
14:30	Fatima El-Tayeb <i>Colour Blind Europe (10 min video)</i>	20
14:40	Discussion	
15:30	End of Conference	

INTRODUCTION: THE CONFERENCE —*Fadlabi and Lars Cuzner*

The two day conference *European Attraction Limited* will attempt to put to the table a non-parochial view on the relevance of a proposed project to recreate a human zoo that occurred in Oslo in 1914.

Three years ago we stumbled upon information about a human zoo that had taken place in the heart of Oslo in 1914. Not being from this country, naturally, we assumed that this was common knowledge among natives, so, in an interest to learn more about the general consent on the exhibition, we started asking around. As it turned out pretty much no one we talked to had ever heard about it (even if they had heard of human zoos in other countries). Given how popular the exhibition was (1.4 million visitors saw it at a time when the population of Norway was 2 million) the widespread absence of at least a general knowledge was surprising.

It is hard to understand how something could be wiped from the collective memory. Is the way we facilitate erasure an innate defense mechanism for producing effective historical amnesia?

Following the discussions around cultural, ethnic and national identity during the few years we've lived in Norway, the circular patterns in the media have be-

come apparent. The discussions are usually triggered by an incident of one kind or another followed by a series of petulant commentary that tend to provide a set form of arguments, the same questions and the same answers, chewed through and never really digested only to be repeated in the same unresolving manner again. We should really rethink this format, we should consume all the old questions and try to pursue new ones without falling into a trap of bumpiness.

Since the 100 year anniversary of the Oslo human zoo was around the corner and because of the impotency of looking at archival images; giving a feeling that it has little to do with us today, we suggested the idea that we would re-build the village. The reaction to our suggestion was mixed. Many were for and many were against. The arguments on both sides were familiar. It was the same circular pattern that we wanted to confront in the first place. Still, the question remains; how do we confront a neglected aspect of the past that still contributes to our present? We wanted to investigate the linear or non-linear (whatever the case may be) connection between the messages of racial superiority that lined the intentions of the human zoos in the past to a more contemporary idea of superiority of goodness.

Human zoos were in general seen as giving important educational experiences and the Oslo human zoo in particular played a key role in an exhibition that marked an important stage in the building of the national identity.

The specific Nordic national branding has come to include the promotion of a people that are not only naturally good but also more tolerant and liberal than most. When quantifying humanitarian goodness the paradox is inherent in the advancement, how can anyone be equal to the most equal? Certainly, the neo right uses humanitarian bravado and liberal tolerance as an argument for cultural and racial exclusion. Moreover, in criticizing the advance of goodness you are often times met by counter conservative arguments such as:

“New forms of social Apartheid and structural destitution have replaced the old colonial divisions. As a result of global processes of accumulation by dispossession, deep inequities are being entrenched by an ever more brutal economic system. The ability of many to remain masters of their own lives is once again tested to the limits.”

*Achille Mbembe,
The Year of Frantz Fanon, 2011*

“So you think we should stop trying to better ourselves just because it makes us look arrogant?”

In an attempt to break from the circularity of these discussions, it might help to distinguish between two understandings of racism: a modern racism and a post-modern racism. The former is based on arguments of inequality and the existence of inferior or superior ethnicities and races. Postmodern racism emphasizes the impossibility of equitable dialogue among different races and ethnicities to establish common rules for living together.

Europe is becoming increasingly xenophobic, closing its borders and utilizing draconian law. We need new perspectives and approaches. We can't discuss racism without discussing global economy and structural racism embedded within the system.

We should also discuss racism among minorities and how that inherent racism is turned into oneness when confronted by Norwegian homogenous racism as a possible defense mechanism generated by the fear of being exposed to xenophobia or Islamophobia.

In the scope of this project we need to discuss what purpose a reenactment can serve, how it is made relevant for us today in order to gain new knowledge that addresses the issue of spectatorship both in 1914 and in 2014.

We are instigating a discussion that we hope leads to new questions. To do this we can't dictate the terms of the discussion. The more we provide the less we get. To simplify an understanding of why we have taken a fairly passive role in this discussion we have come to explain our role as quasi-national therapists. It's a simplification, that is because, for now at least, the content is more important than the form.

“No doubt, historical constructions play essential, almost central roles in the formation of the apparatus and what has been taken for granted as a given in the dominant world order. Therefore within the scope of emancipatory artistic productions, historical reenactments can, and do play a significant role.”

*Centre for Historical
Reenactment, Johannesburg*

THE TERRIBLE BEAUTY OF HINDSIGHT

—*Geir Haraldseth*

This short paper puts the artistic proposal by artists Lars Cuzner and Mohammed Fadlabi for the celebration of the Norwegian bicentennial in 2014 into a context of collective forgetting, as discussed by Pierre Nora, and of simulation and simulacra, in the writings of Jean Baudrillard. The proposed event has not yet happened, but has already raised significant criticism and debate, especially concerning the ethics of the two artists and their reasons for going through with a project that was acceptable in 1914, but unacceptable by contemporary standards. The paper also questions the relevance of the world fairs of the turn of the twentieth century to the work of contemporary artists and the reasoning of the nation state for inviting and supporting the project.



Geir Haraldseth is the director of Rogaland Contemporary Art Center in Stavanger. Haraldseth holds a BA in Fine Arts from Central Saint Martin's College of Art and Design and an MA in Curatorial Studies from Bard College. He has been a curator at the Academy of Fine Arts in Oslo, a regular contributor to *Kunstkritikk*, and *Acne Paper*, and is currently editor of *Landings Journal* and *UKS Forum*, and president of the Norwegian Association of Curators. He has curated exhibitions at the National Museum of Art, Design and Architecture in Oslo, Fotogalleriet in Oslo, Akershus Kunstsenter in Lillestrøm, Vox Populi in Philadelphia, Teatro de Arena in Sao Paulo, Landings Project Space in Vestfossen, Bastard in Oslo, and Torpedo in Oslo.

WHOSE MUSEUM IS IT ANYWAY?

—*Bambi Ceuppens*

The Royal Museum for Central Africa is often called the last colonial museum in the world. Currently, it is undergoing a big renovation process: with the last major renovation of the permanent exhibition having taken place in 1958 during the colonial era, it is felt that a new exhibition, which takes at its starting point recent theoretical insights and pays more attention to contemporary Africa, is needed to transform 'the last colonial museum in the world' into a postcolonial museum. As the temporary closure of the museum hooves into view, more and more Belgians express a desire to leave the current exhibition as it is, as a testimony to the former colonial past. In this contribution, it will be argued that this kind of nostalgia is typical for the ways in which Belgian society at large is unwilling and unable to come to terms with its colonial past and consider Belgians of Congolese descent as citizens who belong in Belgian society.



Bambi Ceuppens is a researcher at the Royal Museum for Central Africa (Tervuren, Belgium), where she researches the western representation of Africa and Africans, the Belgian and Congolese colonial history, the Congolese diaspora in Belgium, colonial and post-colonial popular culture in Congo as well as autochthony, interculturalism and multiculturalism in the Flemish Region.

THE REVOLUTION PERFORMED BY THE WORKERS THEMSELVES

—*Will Bradley*

Fadlabi and Cuzner's *European Attraction* is undoubtedly related to two relatively recent strands of contemporary art production, the full-scale historical reconstruction exemplified by Jeremy Deller's *Battle of Orgreave*, and the self-conscious performance of the power of creative capital to command labour exemplified by the work of Santiago Sierra and Tino Sehgal. However, there also exists a less well-known strand of radical performance that spans the 20th century and offers a very different approach to the same questions.

Two years before Benno Singer's company *European Attraction* arranged the 1914 presentation of a Congolese village in Oslo, a related yet wholly different theatrical production took place in Madison Square Garden in New York. *The Pageant of the Paterson Strike Performed by the Workers Themselves* was an epic performance conceived to publicise and raise money to support a strike by workers at textile mills in New Jersey.

This paper will take this historical coincidence as a starting point to discuss certain key manifestations of radical 'reality theatre' in the 20th century, and to explore the questions that their often well-developed artistic ideologies raise in relation to contemporary art.



Will Bradley is an art critic and curator based in Oslo. His publications include the books *Art and Social Change: A Critical Reader* (editor, Tate Publishing and Afterall Books, 2007), *Self-Organisation/Counter-economic Strategies* (co-editor, Sternberg Press, 2007) and the essays *The New New Monuments* (Metropolis M, 2008) and *Dreaming of Dreaming* (for the *Dream Politics* edition of UKS-Forum, 2009). Currently running, and the founder of Kunsthall Oslo.

HUMAN EXHIBITIONS. RACE, GENDER AND SEXUALITY AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY

—Rikke Andreassen

From the 1880s to the 1910s, Denmark witnessed a long series of exhibitions of so-called exotic people. Here people of Asian, African, Middle Eastern and Northern European origins were exhibited as mass entertainment to mass audiences in zoological gardens, amusement parks and theatres.

In the basement of the Copenhagen Zoological Garden, I have discovered a forgotten archive. Here letters, photographs and documents – describing and illustrating the ‘import’ of people, the staging of exhibitions, the daily life of the exhibitees, etc. – were collecting dust. This archive provides a unique insight to the exhibitions as well as to the racial thinking of the time. The archival material is supplied with articles from contemporary newspapers, scientific journals and magazines. Exhibiting people was not only popular entertainment. Scientists, especially anthropologists, also showed great interest in the people being exhibited.

I elaborate upon the interconnection between the exhibitions and science of the time and draw attention to how the exhibited people fit into the scientific paradigm of evolution that dominated the late 19th century and the early 20th century.



Rikke Andreassen is a researcher, teacher and consultant in communications, addressing ethnic and gender equality issues. An Associate Professor at Communication Studies at Roskilde University. Recently finished a research project about Danish exhibitions of ‘exotic’ people around the turn of the twentieth century.

RACISM EMBEDDED IN THE SYSTEM

—Walid al-Kubaisi

Fadlabi and Cuzner’s *European Attraction* is relevant to wonderland norway because it is in reality not a blissful place. In spite of the fact that Norwegians strongly condemn racism and would like to act tolerant, muslims can sometimes experience to be subjected to serious discrimination.

Among many adventures that turned me to admire Norway and Norwegians, I can also tell about four episodes which does not make me completely happy:

The first is how I experience that the Norwegian public did not accept anyone, but only conformal immigrants. The second episode made me understand struggle against racism as unconsciously diversion.

The third episode is about the racism embedded in the system as practiced politically and legally.

The fourth episode is about how representatives of immigrants are selected to highlight differences while being transformed into a target for unrealistic criticism sometimes.



Walid al-Kubaisi is an author and government scholar. He has notably criticized islamism in the documentary film *Frihet, Likhhet og Det Muslimske Brorskap*. He regards himself as a ‘secular muslim’. In addition to writing non-fiction books, he has translated Arabic poetry to Norwegian: poems by Faisal Hashmi in 2008 and by Eftikhar Ismaeil in 2010. al-Kubaisi argues that the hijab is a political uniform for the militant islamist movement. He maintains, that if islamists will be successful in making the hijab synonymous with islam, they will achieve a victory in the west, which they have not been able to accomplish in muslim countries.

THE DARKEST AFRICA SYNDROME: THE IDEA OF AFRICA AND ITS (RE)PRESENTATION

—*Salah Hassan*

Africa is a complex intellectual construct that means different things to different people. Africa is also a diverse and highly complex historical entity. For the last four centuries, and due to experiences of slavery, colonialism and their resultant mass displacement and diaspora of African peoples and cultures, it is no longer possible to speak of Africa or African as a mere geographic entity or locale. In that context, whatever it is we mean by 'African', is the product of this historically complex entity and global presence.

This paper intends to problematize the idea of Africa as an entry way to understanding its representation and misrepresentation in the western imagination. The paper will examine the different trajectories and tropes of representation of Africa which range from the colonial and most primitivizing ones, to African and diasporic self representations. This will help us contextualize the issues in question, namely, the regimes of representation of Africans on stage, in the context of the museums, or as a spectacle in the context of colonial expositions.



Salah M. Hassan is a Goldwin Smith Professor and Director of the Africana Studies and Research Center, and professor of African and African diaspora art history and visual culture in the History of Art and Visual Studies department at Cornell University. He is also the director of the university's Institute for Comparative Modernities and served as chair of History of Art between 2000 and 2005. Hassan is editor of *NKA: Journal of Contemporary African Art* and consulting editor for *African Arts* and *Atlantica*. Professor Hassan has curated several international exhibitions including at the 49th Venice Biennale, the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam and the Dakar Biennale.

CONTEMPORARY RACIAL STEREOTYPES IN THE NORDIC COUNTRIES

—*Tobias Hübinette*

In recent years, there has been an increased presence and popularity of various racial stereotypes in the contemporary visual culture of the Nordic countries. With Sweden as the main example and with references from other Nordic countries, this presentation takes as its point of departure the question of why racial stereotypes have become so widespread and popular in a European region which traditionally prides itself of being tolerant and antiracist. What is at stake, which function do these racial stereotypes play and what lies behind their popularity?



Dr. Tobias Hübinette is a Reader in Intercultural Education at Södertörn University and a researcher in critical race and whiteness studies at the Multicultural Centre. He has among others published *Comforting an Orphaned Nation* (2006), *Adoption med förhinder* [*Adoption with obstacles*] (2008), co-authored with Carina Tigervall, and *Den interkulturella blicken i pedagogik* [*The Intercultural Gaze in Pedagogy*] (2012), co-edited with Katrin Goldstein-Kyaga and Maria Borgström.

THE ORIGINS OF THE 'REGIME OF GOODNESS' —*Nina Witoszek*

The Norwegian 'regime of goodness' is has become a highly an ironic description of the Norwegian façade of Samaritanism and kindness at home and abroad. But is it just a façade? As I shall try to show, Norwegian national identity is actually base on the idea goodness. My questions will be: who have been the architects of the regime of goodness? What are its rites and stories and what is its staying power in the age of cynical reason? Finally, how does the 'burden' of goodness affect the relationship between the natives and the ethnic minorities?



Nina Witoszek is a professor and Research Director at the Centre for Development and the Environment at Oslo University. Prior to her work at SUM, Nina Witoszek taught comparative cultural history at the National University of Ireland in Galway (1995-1997) and the European University in Florence (1997-1999). She held fellowships at the Swedish Collegium of the Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences in Uppsala (1993), Robinson College, Cambridge (1995) and Mansfield College, Oxford (2001) and visiting professorship at Stanford University (2010).

MODERATOR *Natalie Hope O'Donnell*



Natalie Hope O'Donnell is a curator and PhD candidate in the research project *Place and Displacement: Exhibiting Architecture* at the Oslo School of Architecture and Design, which continues her research into curatorial practices at the London Consortium. Hope O'Donnell completed a BA in Modern History and Politics at Jesus College, Oxford (2002) and holds a BA degree in History of Art and Political Science from the University of Oslo. She also has a PGDL/LPC postgraduate degree in Law, and graduated from the Royal College of Art in London with an MA in Curating Contemporary Art (2008). Hope O'Donnell has worked for the Norwegian National Touring Exhibitions, the DSV Network in Oslo, the Whitechapel Art Gallery in

London, and is co-curator of the *Pushwagner retrospective*, which ends its current tour at Museum Boijmans van Beuningen in February 2013. Her exhibition of Norwegian film and video art entitled *Propeller: the 1990s* is currently on view at Atopia in Oslo. Further information on projects and publications available at: aho.academia.edu/NatalieODonnell

OTHER CONTRIBUTORS

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