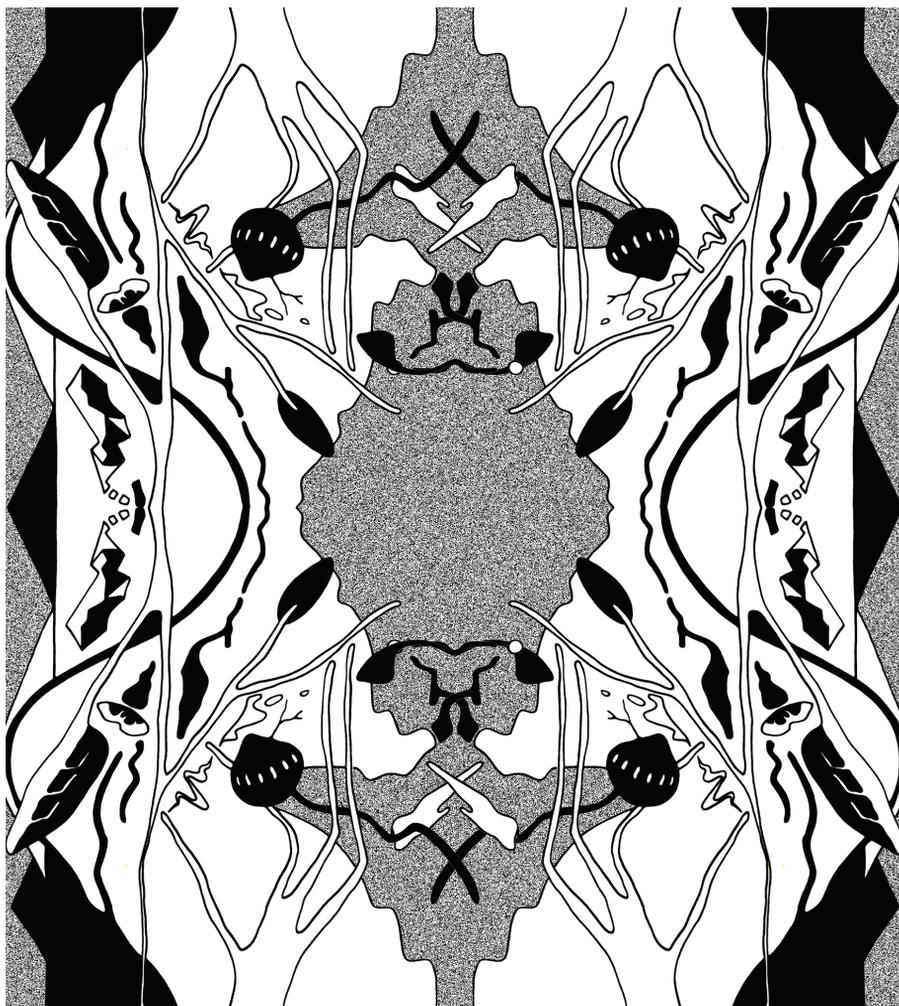


LITTERATURTIDSSKRIFTET

LASSO



#2 - 2015 BARK

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TØRRRESVOLD



FUTURE LIBRARY/ FRAMTIDSBIBLIOTEKET EN SAMTALE MED KATIE PATERSON

Sommeren 2014 ble det plantet en skog i Nordmarka. Om hundre år skal trærne bli en bokantologi. Hvert år skal det skrives én bok som vil ligge skjult for verden frem til utgivelsen i 2114. Tekstene bevares i et eget rom på Deichmanske bibliotek i Bjørvika mens de venter på sine lesere. Forfatteren bak årets manuskript er Margaret Atwood. Litteraturtidsskriftet Lasso tok en tur i Hundreårsskogen med Katie Paterson, kunstneren bak verket.

Why are we in the forest?

This journey is part of the artwork. It should be a fifteen or twenty minute walk to reach the *Future Library* trees. Even though it is in the city it feels very distant, remote and quiet. You could be in the middle of any forest. Part of the idea is that people can come and make the walk. They should not expect anything spectacular, but year by year they will be able to see the growth of the forest. Visitors are not obliged in any way to come here and experience it, but it is an aspect of the artwork, just like the library room I am going to design that will hold the manuscripts. These are the main ways in to experience the work. Otherwise it is quite intangible.

Future Library seems to be difficult to delimit in terms of time, space and idea.

It is pretty hard to define the limits of *Future Library*, but I think there are limits. Certain limits are even decided after I am dead. There are some visible physical aspects such as the forest and

*THERE ARE SO MANY UNKNOWNNS.
ONE YEAR HAS PASSED AND WE HAVE
NINETY-NINE TO GO. THIS MAKES THE
WORK SO OPEN.*

the books, but there are also all the unseen parts: the words that are held inside the manuscripts, that are going to be read, and all the aspects that go on in the authors' processes when they are writing, considering the fact that they cannot talk about it. There are so many unknownns. One year has passed and we have

ninety-nine to go. This makes the work so open. No one knows how it is going to unfold over the years. What will become of the *Future Library* in a century?

The artwork is determined by a major transformation. The process of creating the anthology is one aspect of the work. When it is finished, another aspect emerges. The first work depends on a future, while the second depends on history.

The growing of the forest, which you can experience by making this trip, witnesses this transformation. The transformation is happening in the trees. They are growing, forming and changing over a hundred years and becoming something else: A kind of literal transformation of the trees becoming pulp. There is also the cyclic element where we use trees to build the library room and make space to grow new ones. The natural regeneration process is very present. We are using the remains of the trees to make certificates that entitle the owners to an edition of the anthology, to be received in a hundred years time as well. Another interesting transformation is the transformation of the words over the years. The readers are not even born. It must be a very different approach for the authors writing for no present readership and criticism. They can write anything. Margaret Atwood's manuscript will not be read by either her closest family or me. It will be entering a time capsule. The "Future Library Trust" is an important key to make it work.



What significance does reality play in this artwork?

I do not want the artwork to be a fiction and just relate to some reality, but to *be* reality, to happen in reality. As in many of my works, the image of a stone that has been on the moon is not as important as presenting a stone that has actually been on the moon. Even though *Future Library* seems like fiction and feels a bit like a story itself, it is important that it is all real, and that the authors enter the capsule. We have to show them that the trees are treated properly and are going to last. All these practical elements take it away from being fictional. Because of this fictional element people sometimes question my projects. It makes me frustrated having them wonder whether I actually carry projects through when I put so much effort in making them real. What would be the point of making people call the underwater microphone in the Jökulsárlón lagoon if I was just sitting in the other end splashing around in the bathtub? One thing that makes an effect of unreality in this project is not about fiction but about the texts being unreachable. Without the forest the project could feel entirely fictional. The work confronts people with a huge scope of time passing. It really creates a feeling of what a lifetime is. *Future Library* has the ability of producing time. You could say my other works uses themes of extremely long time spans: one million, one billion years. *Future Library* is the shortest in this comparison. But such a present time span must make it the longest. “A lifetime” as a theme should also make it different from my other projects, giving a deeper perspective on human life.

You are also exploring human existence. This is a challenge for future generations.

We have to trust people that we have never met. The work relies on somebody that is not even born. Somebody could just get the idea to take down the forest. The generation in a hundred years time will have to chop the trees and make the books. Imagine asking this of somebody that does not yet exist. As Atwood has said, we have to trust there will be human beings left at all. There are earthworks and artworks that have existed for a long time and have involved great responsibility, for example Robert Smithson’s *Spiral Jetty*. But such things are quite different. Institutions look after these works and landmarks to be preserved for the future. It does not involve people actively making the artwork in the present moment over time. So the ambition of *Future Library* is fairly rare, I think. We have talked with the “Artangel”, a London-based art organization that works with long term artworks. There is also “The Long Now Foundation”. There are people in the arts working and thinking about the future. But relatively, not that many. What future generations

are asked to do is not much, but it depends on the links between us and them. To believe in their commitment is to test what we are capable of.

Is it possible to experience the work without knowing the idea?

Some might say that needing to know the background of an artwork kind of weakens it. But you need a reader to complete a book. There are a lot of artworks that do exist in themselves, and of themselves, and you do not need anything else other than the direct experience of it. Still there are so many artworks that of course need an experience or explanation outside of themselves. They exist in the world, and the world is a lot more complex than they are. The thing about my art, I hope, is that you do need a story, but the story is not that complex: Here are the seedlings that are going to make a book in a hundred years. You do not need any art historical background. You just need to imagine these things. When I find art problematic sometimes, is when you need to know a backstory that is so complex that you cannot access it. I hope *Future Library* is accessible. You do need to know what is going on, you do have to do a bit of work yourself. This also adds to the question about limitations. In music, the score is the score, but it can be interpreted in an infinite number of ways. And all these interpretations are part of the artwork. In *Future Library* those interpretations are so far away. At times it feels without limits. It is not a defined artwork, it is not even many artworks, it is more like a mass of artworks. That is interesting to me, to work with something that has distant aspects. The artwork is really alive.

How was the idea for Future Library born?

I got the idea some years ago when I was drawing tree rings. Then I made the connection between trees, chapters, paper, pulp and books. The tree rings made me see a book expanding. And I like the idea of preserving words over time as well: preserving them in what has become almost outdated. So the artwork has become complex, with no specific unity. For me, one of the most important parts of my work is the first creative thought. It is a shame that the time for having those moments of total creative freedom, that I call “ideas time”, is getting reduced. I am actually going to make a book of two hundred ideas for artworks that I have had over the years. They have become short texts now, like haikus and each of them expresses the idea for a work with only a few words. Hopefully they will be perceived as works in themselves. Most of them will probably never become actual things or objects so instead I am trying to use text and create in people’s imagination, if nowhere else. I would say that eighty percent of the ideas are totally impossible, because they might involve Mars or something that can never ever be done. I like that text allows you to do that. It

I WOULD SAY THAT EIGHTY PERCENT OF THE IDEAS ARE TOTALLY IMPOSSIBLE, BECAUSE THEY MIGHT INVOLVE MARS OR SOMETHING THAT CAN NEVER EVER BE DONE. I LIKE THAT TEXT ALLOWS YOU TO DO THAT.

can happen even though it is simply in somebody's mind. The creative process is so important to me and I am trying to work to make it more present. I believe that the experience of walking and being in the forest has an aesthetic value in itself. I hope that the journey into the forest will not create immense expectations so that people will get disappointed. It is just a forest. Hopefully it becomes more meaningful knowing what these trees are going to become.

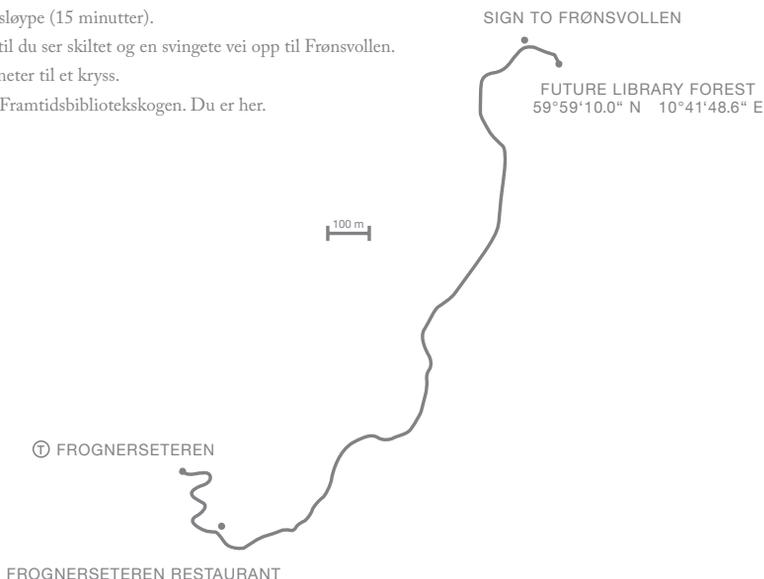
Av Ola Mile Bruland og Julia Wiedlocha

Future Library Forest Walk 1.6 km

Take Line no. 1 (T-bane) from Sentralstasjon to Frognerseieren station (20 minutes).
Follow the signs to Frognerseieren restaurant (5 minutes).
Follow the path lined with streetlights for skiing (15 minutes).
Pass a sign and small winding road climbing up a hill to Frønsvollan.
Keep on walking to the right for 100 metres.
You will see a cross road with a sign 'Future Library Forest'. You are here.

Gåtur til Framtidsbibliotekets skog 1.6 km

Ta T-bane 1 til Frognerseieren stasjon (20 minutter).
Følg skiltet til Frognerseieren restaurant (5 minutter).
Følg veien med lysløype (15 minutter).
Følg kartet og gå til du ser skiltet og en svingete vei opp til Frønsvollan.
Fortsett så i 100 meter til et kryss.
Se etter skiltet til Framtidsbibliotekets skogen. Du er her.





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