



HDK-VALAND – HÖGSKOLAN FÖR KONST OCH DESIGN

Geo-Aesthetical Discontent

Svalbard, the Guide and Post-Future Essayism

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Akademisk avhandling för konstnärlig doktorsexamen i konstnärlig gestaltning vid HDK-Valand – Högskolan för konst och design, Göteborgs universitet, som med tillstånd av Konstnärliga fakultetens dekan offentligt kommer att försvaras onsdagen den 2 mars 2022 kl 13:00 vid HDK-Valand, Vasagatan 50, Göteborg

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Abstract

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Propelled by the acute ecological crisis, *Geo-Aesthetical Discontent: Svalbard, the Guide and Post-Future Essayism* moves between artistic affinities and academic disciplines to craft an intervention into the imaginary of an Arctic place. Designed as an iterative set of artistic practice experiments with live editing, the aim is to demonstrate a *geo-aesthetical discontent* upon terrains with colonial history for visual production.

By subverting the historically monolithic and singular narrative of the Arctic, the artistic research explicitly attends to the Arctic Archipelago of *Svalbard* as a site of- and for image-making that has historical effects on cultural imaginations of the future of the planet and its political and ecological systems. However, as evidenced by the current attention to the term “mediation”, image-making cannot be fully grasped through representational discourses and the traditional exemplars of the artist and the scientist. Rather, this dissertation mobilizes *the guide* as a figure that embodies how skilled practicing – and hence affect, sensibility and care – are intrinsic to questions of mediation, when understood as a process or milieu that is never foreclosed. Representations (in all their varied forms) are part of the relational configurations that emerge from considering mediation as a geographical event. This is the geo-aesthetical condition.

Meanwhile, the research is practice-based in exploring all this through a meta-reflexive (and political) experimentation that addresses questions of technology in relation to affective and historical knowledges. Situated between traditions of experimental ethnography and essayistic approaches to film as practice I propose what I term *post-future essayism*: a precarious filmic methodology and epistemological strategy of the moving image; a fragmentary and momentary compositional effect that seeks to navigate and negotiate the role of film in relation to a historiographic concept of futurity.

The dissertation, then, is a response to a discontentment with current portrayals of the Arctic that produce the region as an outside to the global west. At stake is to connect the production of an artistic practice – significantly described in relation to historical image-makers such as Jette Bang, Emilie Demant Hatt and Johan Turi, Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson – and the production of the Arctic.