

## *Fotografi som digital bild*

NARRATION OCH NAVIGATION I FYRA NORDISKA KONSTVERK

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### ABSTRACT

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The aim of this thesis is to conduct a multifaceted discussion that takes as its starting point analyses of individual artworks in which digital and photographic technology play a prominent part. The thesis also has a methodological aim, to find a model for analysing net art and art on CD-ROM. The discussion centres on narration, perception and the structure, and materiality of the artworks. Fiction and documentation, the interplay of image, text and sound, the pixel as a picture element, the lifecycles of the works, and gender aspects are considered. In what way have the artists made use of the new technology? How are the works constructed? Which problems and issues are dealt with in the works and what form do they take? How do the works relate to earlier pictorial traditions? How do they relate to other contemporary art? How are the works exhibited? What has been written about the works? Can the term *site specific* be applied to digital artworks? These are important research questions.

Four works by Nordic artists dating from the later part of the 1990's have been chosen for analysis. *I våra händer* (*In Our Hands*) by the Swedish artist Maria Ångqvist Klyvare, consists of three tile mosaics depicting hands on the walls of Värberg underground station in Stockholm, with the pictures originating in digitally processed photographs. The individual tiles function as pixels. The work requires that viewers' are capable of decoding it, and assumes a certain way of seeing, generated by the ubiquitous use of the computer screen in our society. *Faces*, by the Norwegian artist Vibeke Tandberg, is a series of computer-manipulated portraits in which the artist's own features have been mixed with other people's. The work can be regarded as an instance of morphing. The boundaries between the genders are an important issue in this work, to which computer manipulation adds a crucial dimension. *Parken* (*The Park*), by the Swedish photographer Leif Claesson, is a CD-ROM containing documentary photographs of a run-down area of Stockholm with many homeless residents. The images are accompanied by sound effects and by readings from letters and diaries. The photographs can be explored by searching for hotspots, which are linked to other sounds, images or texts. In this way, the user can navigate through the disc, which does not contain any finished stories, instead, users are free to construct their own. The theme of death and perishability is pervasive. In my opinion, the digital format does not diminish the documentary status of the work. The net artwork *The Incident*, by the Danish artist Balder Olrik, consists of a fictive story centred on images from spiritual séances. In an introductory letter, the artist appeals for help in solving the mystery of a strange book. The work plays with the visitor's fear and is a typical example of fake net-art projects, and can be regarded as being *site specific*.

A model for analysing net art and art on CD-ROM must pay attention to questions of structure and navigation, as well as to individual elements, such as web pages and images. To this end, graphical representations are useful. For the analysis of all four artworks, the concept of paratext and the narratological perspective have proved valuable.

**KEYWORDS:** digital photography, photography, narratology, perception, CD-ROM art, net art, Internet art, pixel, fictive artworks, documentary, computer manipulation, Nordic art, contemporary art, authenticity

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