



# **THE POETICS OF MIRRORS**

**A KU-Project by Anna-lill Nilsson 2009-2011**



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## Abstract

*The poetics of the mirrors* is a description of an artistic process, an investigation of mirrors in landscape. The main question for the study has been; How do the mirror images change the viewer's experience of site and time? However, another question became more and more important during the exploration; how to present the perceived mirror images for a viewer. This question caused a change in the equipment from flat mirrors to floating mirror pyramids. It's this form of presentation that adds something new to earlier mirror investigations in historical and contemporary contexts. My aim from the start was to create images and later, videos, but the completed presentation became an installation where the photography and the videos were documentations. The installation gave constantly shifting mirror images in a moving stream when the pyramids circulated in the water. If the weather was sunny, the mirrors sent moving reflections into the surrounding landscape. When there was no wind, the pyramids turned into perfect diamonds. The pyramids are objects for transcendence, a sort of transformer. I call them *transcendents*<sup>1</sup>. A conclusion that I drew from of the main question; how the mirror images change the viewer's experience of site is that: It creates, *Other Spaces*. This statement refers to a text with the same name of Michael Foucault were he discuss whether the mirror image is a utopia or a heterotopia or if it is both<sup>2</sup>. I have used a phenomenological approach in the project that deals with existential issues in a romantic context. The phenomenological approach was essential for the way the work was presented in the final installation.

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1 The word transcendent is used e.g. in mathematics. It is an adjective and describes the characteristics of numbers; numbers can be transcendent. Some of them can be seen as threshold values. Transcendent is something that exceeds the threshold or normal limits. The word is synonymous with transcendental. A noun was created from the adjective transcendent. It is a new coinage; the word did not exist before. I was thinking that a transcendent would mean someone who converts or transforms by exceeding limits.

2 "Other Spaces" refers to the text with a similar name by Foucault (used by me from the Swedish essay collection of Foucault's works entitled: *Andra rum i Diskursernas kamp*, Brutus Östlings Bokförlag Symposion 2008.) Please note that many of the works cited in this study refer to the Swedish versions of the texts in question. If relevant and/or necessary, I have provided an English gloss of the title, but the page numbers given are from the Swedish versions.

## Background

The poetics of mirrors began with a pilot project, 'Reflection Points, Phenomenography as method', a study of mirrors in landscapes. The starting point in the pilot project was how the experience of mirrors reflecting their surroundings affects the perception of time and place in the observer. The objective was to find out how this experience takes place. The question that drove the process was: How does the mirror image affect the experience of time and place in the viewer? In addition, a qualitative research methodology, phenomenography, was tested in a modified form. In phenomenography<sup>3</sup> one usually investigates other people's perceptions, but the present study was based on my own experience of mirror installations in nature, their relation to other artists' mirror works and writings about mirror images, along with cultural beliefs about mirrors. I focused a lot on taking photos and creating a large number of image variations rather than creating qualitative configurations. The result developed into four categories through which one can understand how mirror images are perceived.

The four categories are: parallel worlds, magic mirrors, memories and scenes.

The important thing at that stage was to understand how I saw mirror images, not to portray these experiences for others. The first three of the above categories interested me the most. They tied in with common themes: memories, impermanence, death, and the realization of the brevity of life as well as the perception of gaps in the reality, portals to other worlds, parallel timelines, and the experience of non-time. These themes have their roots in Romanticism. Similarly to the Romantic

3 Alexandersson. M. Den fenomenografiska forskningsansatsens fokus i Kvalitativ metod och Vetenskapsteori, Starrin B& Svensson P-G (eds.), p. 111 Lund 2006

artist, I have often tried to express both impermanence and spiritual experiences, often linked to nature. My art is about existence, time and place. The time that is and the time that passes. By the phrase 'the time that is' I am referring to the experience of non-time that we all have when we lose ourselves in something that engrosses us. It is also the time which, in meditation and mysticism, is described as singular and whole; present now and eternal at the same time, including both then, now and later. The passage of time is 'clock time', measurable time, which is divided into what was, what is and what is to come. Space can be a constraint in time as well as a physical place. A particular statement by Paul Klee<sup>4</sup> has been important to me here; he said, "Art makes the invisible visible."

I want to convey a broader vision on many levels. In this context, a 'sense of wonder' is an important phrase.

The fourth category, scenes, was not as important for me as the others, although it has potential. It focuses more on human relationships and it has been studied mainly in film, but to my knowledge, it is not commonly used in the visual arts.

4 Claesson, Nordgren, Klee. A (eds.). Klee Paul: exhibition catalog Malmö Konsthall 1991





## The components of the study

In the pilot study, there was no ambition to create art. Instead, the aim was to investigate whether my fascination with mirror images was worth researching more closely. The mirror image recurred often in my art. A recurrent interpretation of the mirror image was as a portal, but I had not conducted any detailed analysis of this.

Husserl argued that we must return to the things themselves and start with them.<sup>5</sup> The mirror was my thing. My intention was to explore the following in relation to the experience of time and place of mirror images:

- mirror format and size
- number of mirrors and double mirrors
- the angle of the mirrors (from lying flat on the ground to standing straight)
- the angle of the mirrors in relation to each other
- double mirrors
- mirrors in rural settings and in urban environments
- broken mirrors
- interpretations of mirrored space
- the relationship between my mirror works and others' mirror works and texts regarding mirror images

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5 Cornell Peter. Saker : Om tingens synlighet. 1993, p.31.

## Method

I decided to abandon the phenomenographic method used in the pilot project, though I still wanted to use phenomenology, which I see as a starting point in all my artistic work. The difference here, however, is that I made a conscious choice to work on a phenomenological basis. In the pilot study, I distanced myself from my work and studied it from the outside. In the present project, I wanted to get close to the work and study it from within.

Phenomenology is a way of relating to the world and our knowledge of it. Phenomenology deals with life-worlds, your 'lived' world and mine, the world we experience. It does not try to measure or quantify the world but rather takes into account people's stories and perceptions of the world. Art and life mix all the time in my experience. Art is simply a means to explore and express life.

"Back to the things themselves!" was Husserl's famous adage and he wanted to explore the relationship between objects and cognizance.<sup>6</sup> From the very start, it was this rallying-cry that gave birth to my interest in phenomenology. Still-lives and objects interest me. We need to understand how things appear to us, how we experience them, how we perceive color, shape, light, sound, texture, space and how they convey meaning to us. By 'things', Husserl is mainly referring to objects, but also memories, emotions, myths and meanings, everything that our consciousness can be directed toward,<sup>7</sup> thus also what things represent. Long after my encounter with Husserl I discovered Gaston Bachelard.<sup>8</sup> For him phenomenology was

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6 Cornell, Peter Saker :Om tingens synlighet.1993. p.31.

7 Cornell, Peter Saker :Om tingens synlighet.1993. p.31.

7 Bachelard Gaston , (b. 1884 in Bar-Sur-Aube, d.1962), was a French philosopher. Professor in history and philosophy of the sciences at the Sorbonne. Retrieved. 20110808.

more about our references and representations of things than direct sensory perceptions. Bachelard says that he is a phenomenologist who experiences archetypal primal images.<sup>9</sup> In my interpretation of his work, he asks, 'what role does the home, the basement or the attic<sup>10</sup> have for us? In what meaningful structures do they exist? There is a comment in one of my notebooks from 2001: *My eyes bring things to life, awakens them, but first the room and its contents awakened me. The sight of the room and its contents reveal the limits of time and life.* I wrote a text on 'listening' eyes during this period and this is very much in accord with my experience of phenomenology. It is about listening with your eyes. The Swedish radio program Filosofiska rummet (The Philosophical Room, my translation) broadcast on Sunday, May 23, 2010 at 5pm on the Swedish national radio station P1 dealt with phenomenology. In this show, they used a phrase like, "we are condemned to meaning". The world is meaningful in relation to ourselves and our lives. In the statement, I see phenomenology's existential core and it is this idea that the project links to even more than the body's direct sensory communication with the world.

In phenomenology, the world is inextricably linked with the subject. Phenomenology's relation to the body also plays an important role in my artistic process in the sense that we do not inhabit our bodies but rather are our bodies.<sup>11</sup> I understand that the experience we can have of the world comes through our senses and is not there from the beginning. It is based on experience. We experience the world through our senses and in this experience meaning arises for us.

In the context of mirrors, the direct corporeal experiences are that we can see what is behind us in the reflection before us, and that the mirror makes

it clear what is inside and outside, here and there. In the mirror, the scene behind the viewer, through memories, emotions, and meanings which he/she brings to it, becomes spatial stories and places in the landscape in front of the viewer.

What interests me is how the subject's perception and experience of the world becomes personal knowledge of it. The relationship between space, the thing itself and the subject creates experiences. This experiential knowledge creates meaning. Between me and the mirrors there is a relationship. From this relationship grow experiences, understandings and perceptions. I have looked for a meaning in my own mirror work, which has functioned intuitively, but has not been formulated. I use phenomenology because it is based on the experience and knowledge from the dialogue between the subject and the experienced reality. I have looked for patterns in my own mirror experiences and those related to other mirror works, myths and philosophical texts. The focus of the project is on that which carries meaning.

## The study

### Mirror shape and Size

At the beginning of the project, I had a notion that a vertical, rectangular shape is perceived as a gateway or portal. That is the conclusion I had drawn from previous mirror works. However, it turned out not to be the case.

Other things provided the experience of a portal and the vertical format could underscore that, but hardly in itself express the sense of a gateway. The important thing was that there were spatial dimensions in the mirror. Mirror size did not have any significant impact on how the mirror image was interpreted, though a larger mirror image enhanced the interpretation.

### Number of mirrors

Many mirrors arranged in a row resulted in a stronger sense of the mirror image, but I cannot

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9 Lindfors Kent, in the preface to, Bachelard Gaston. Rummets poetic.. 2000, p.13.

10 Bachelard Gaston. Rummets poetik. 2000, pp. 55, 111, 127.

11 Merleau Ponty Maurice. Varseblivningens fenomenologi. (Phénoméologie de la perception, 1945) pp.41, 61.

say that the number could directly change the experience into something completely different. Perhaps it is easier to perceive these configurations as memories as the mirror images are related but can still be seen in isolation. There is an experience of a kind of defragmentation of the whole.

### Mirror angle

Mirrors lying on the ground often conveyed fragmented reflections. An almost upright mirror gave rise to the feeling of a portal since the demarcation between inside and outside was clearly seen in the mirror. This angle also showed that which is in front and behind the mirror in many layers, which gave the feeling that you could pass into it. Mirrors that were partially angled reflected the surrounding landscape and sky. This produced a sense of an opening, a window, but not a sense that you could go into or through the mirror. The fully upright mirror, with a 90 degree angle to the ground, did not create a meaningful image for the viewer.

### Broken mirrors

Some mirrors tipped over during my work at Uddevalla harbor. Because the mirrors had a layer of plastic on the back, they held together even though they were broken. I decided to try the new opportunity that arose from the situation. The broken mirrors fragmented the environment and simultaneously put it together in strange distorted combinations. The expression of these mirrors could be placed in my categories, but cracked ones added something more. The mirror is a powerful metaphor and a cracked mirror is even stronger. In the broken mirror, the fractured images emerged as reflections of a damaged life. That which was perceived as threatening could strike again at any time, like aftershocks in an earthquake.

### The angle of the mirrors to each other

If mirrors were angled more or less toward each other, then a mirror could reflect a mirror. This

increased the sense of space in the first mirror as it incorporated mirror number two. At certain angles, you could get a mirror to reflect in a mirror in a mirror until it appeared as an infinite space.

### Double Mirrors

Double Mirrors provide a very special experience when a mirror reflects a mirror. This can be repeated indefinitely. The double-mirror gives a sense of relationship between the mirrors and embodies a mutual dependence. The two mirrors can be perceived differently relative to one another. In most cases, the first was to my mind a port while the secondary mirror could be seen as an opening or a flat surface.

I tried double mirrors for the first time at the lakes of Marsjöarna. In these reflections I saw parallel worlds, scenes, flashbacks, or magic mirrors, but



*The umbilical cord*

something new emerged, too. I had brought gauze into the woods with me. When this was tried out along with twin mirrors, I had the feeling of a cord and a symbiotic relationship, a combined experience of extreme dependence, attachment, and simultaneously a kinship. Until this point, photography had been the obvious way to depict reflections. Double mirroring brought to mind thoughts of Martin Buber and his theories about me and you and me and it. Buber says that without you, or it, there is no me. The relationship arises in three spheres according to him; "life with nature" is the first relationship. It remains below the threshold of language. The second relationship is "life with man" in which the relationship is manifest and enters the language. The third is "life with spiritual beings". There, "the relationship is wrapped in a cloud, but reveals itself, it lacks but creates language".<sup>12</sup> I could perceive all three relationships in the double mirror, but I had trouble finding words for what I saw. It was a picture of the human predicament; everyone's situation. The one mirror image could not reach outside the surface of the second mirror. The dependency was absolute! I started thinking about how the viewer might experience a direct relationship with the mirrors.

Through Martin Buber's second relation (see above), I saw the mirror as representative of mankind. The mirrors then showed a you and I relationship. The third relationship with the spiritual world was the most subtle and elusive. Maybe you can describe it as a presence that reflects a different presence, this was the most important reflection and this has been the driving force in this project. Without being able to articulate the word, I met Martin Buber's perpetual you, "[...] the train of the eternal You; in each we perceive a breath of it [...]".<sup>13</sup>

## Mirrors in different landscapes

I placed mirrors in various kinds of natural landscapes and later in the project, also in an urban environment. The project began with mirrors in the cultural landscape of Skåne. It continued with

the forest and lake scenery in Dalsland, the sea and beaches in Bohuslän and finally reflections in Uddevalla harbor. I could not find that the landscape or environment itself played a crucial role in interpreting the mirror image.

## Interpretation of reflections

In the reflections arose everything from images that expressed a flatness to images that were intensely spatial. The flat mirror images were often attributable to a long viewing distance, or that the mirror was reflected in mirrors several times and the last reflection was quite small, obscure, and hence flat.

I interpreted reflections from my photographs of them, but with the actual event close in time and memory. There were doors, windows, vents, spaces and places with different meanings. Sometimes a mirror could be seen as a passage to a parallel world. On yet another occasion, a reflection was perceived as a place for memories. The reflections I experienced as memories often contained traces of humans, while the parallel worlds, in most cases, involved only nature. Some mirrors' reflected images were majestic. These I interpreted as magic mirrors, mirrors with messages. Some reflections felt forbidden, as if you were spying through the mirror. These reflections often contained artifacts of various kinds, and they reflected the kinds of places where people might show up.

From the material, four categories crystallized:

*The reflections seen as parallel realities*

*The reflections seen as flashbacks*

*The reflections perceived as magic mirrors; mirrors with a message.*

*The reflections perceived as stages or scenes.*

## Relationship to other people's mirror works and texts

There are a lot of artists, both past and present,

12 Buber Martin. Jag och Du. 2001, p.11.

13 Buber Martin. Jag och Du. 2001 p.7

who have worked with mirror reflections. For example, Pistoletto showed mirror works at the 2009th Venice Biennale.

Also in 2009, there was a Voodoo exhibition which included mirrors at the Museum of World Culture in Gothenburg. Nevertheless, I have selected below those approaches that are the most interesting for me.

The mirror symbolizes vision and therefore is a metaphor for the soul, a symbol of the eternal light of Zen-cultures. The mirror may also be used to empty consciousness during meditation<sup>14</sup> and the mirror is often associated with an enhanced consciousness. To me, these thoughts linked up with the idea of the mirror as a gateway to a parallel universe, i.e. the category of parallel worlds.

**Robert Smithson** in his mirror projects in the Yucatan, makes reference to another way of seeing. He borrowed the term, "low level scanning"<sup>15</sup> a kind of unconscious vision that avoids distinguishing between figure and background, a way of seeing which is well known among artists. When sketching, it is said that all forms are equal and you perceive this is easier if you focus on the space between objects rather than on the objects which you want to draw. You can see examples of this way of looking in the Japanese woodblock prints that came to the West during the 19th century<sup>16</sup>. But Smithson went even further, "He joins de Yucatecans in their primordial indifferent, strabismic condition<sup>17</sup>". He is fascinated not only by the subconscious state and its possibilities as described in Zen, but he is also fascinated by conditions like suffering, lethargy, stupor, breakdowns, exhaustion and stagnation. Smithson often returned to the concept of entropy, which can be seen as a cosmic equivalent of the conditions listed above. The first law of thermodynamics states

that energy cannot be created but rather is only transformed from one form to another. The second law of thermodynamics states that when energy is converted into work, there is always some leakage or waste. Some energy is lost, it leaks out as heat. This in turn implies that the universe is moving towards heat death, a state in which everything is disordered heat.<sup>18</sup>

In Suzan Boettger's text about Smithson in Yucatan<sup>19</sup> she believes that Smithson relates his mirror travels to John. L. Stephens's expedition of 1843, "Incidence of travels in Yucatan". Stephens made a series of notes from the desolate places that inspired Smithson in his mirror projects. Susan Boettger argues that Stephens nurtured Smithson's desire for derelict sites and his interest in entropy. Consequently, in his mirror travel in Yucatan, one can also perceive his mirror sites as non-sites rather than sites. When reading Smithson's own text<sup>20</sup> on Yucatan, I sense that he has a Romantic idea of primitive peoples, in which he lifts up their capability to live in the present, a presence that becomes simultaneously an absence in that it denies reflections. The timeless state he seeks in his pictures is more about destruction and death than the presence and life. I found a connection in Smithson's mirror images as regards the experience of time as whole and singular, a time without movement. At the same time, I perceived that the time he sought was of emptiness, whereas my experience of time in the mirror was more contemporaneous, a now that includes everything, a beginning and an end. In Smithson's case it was not about portals or gateways, of utopias or heterotopias, but about a state of extinction.

In the painting "The Magdalene with Two Flames" by the **Georges La Tours**<sup>21</sup> (1593 -1652) there is, for me, a greater constancy in the experience of the mirror image. Mary Magdalene holds a skull in her lap. At that time, the skull would have symbo-

14 Werness, Hope, B The symbolism of mirrors in art from ancient times to the present 1999

15 Roberts Jennifer L. Smithson and Stephens in Yucatán, Mirror – Travels. 2004, p.102.

16 [http://sv.wikipedia.org/wiki/Katsushika\\_Hokusai](http://sv.wikipedia.org/wiki/Katsushika_Hokusai)

17 Strabismus is a condition in which the eyes are not properly aligned with each other. It can make the sufferer look infantile. Roberts Jennifer L. Smithson and Stephens in Yucatán, Mirror – Travels. 2004, p. 9.

18 Bonniers stora lexikon 1989 del 13 sid.144

19 Boettger Suzan, In the Yucatán: Mirroring Presence and Absence.,2004 sid.201

20 Smithson Robert. Incidents of mirror-travel in the Yucatán. 1996, p. 102.

21 [http://poopakraad.com/Writing\\_Text\\_Research\\_1.html](http://poopakraad.com/Writing_Text_Research_1.html) 20111106



Georges La Tours' (1593-16529)  
*"The Magdalene with two flames"*

lized the contemplation of death. On the table is a candle whose flame is reflected in a mirror.

Magdalene's eyes stare into the darkness behind the mirror. In this painting, I can perceive a clear, "here" and "there", the space outside and inside the mirror, the light in this world and the light on the other side. One can imagine that this is what the painting wants to convey to us and the same thing as the mirror wants to tell Magdalene.

Georges La Tour 'is reported to have had a Christian faith and the light can therefore symbolize Christ, "I am the light" says Jesus<sup>22</sup>.

Based on my categories, this would be a mirror image which shows a parallel universe or a mirror that carries a message.

**Ingmar Bergman** also used mirrors in many of his productions. "The mirror can be an opening in the real world," writes Maret Koskinen in her dissertation on Bergman's films. "Through mono-

22 The Gospel of John, 8:12.

logue, the self can become its own audience and the mirror a metaphorical theater"<sup>23</sup>.

In my photographs of mirrors, there were no people, but just the experience of the mirror as a gateway in the real world signified to me both the mirror as a portal to a parallel world, and the mirror as a bearer of a message.

**Yayoi Kusama** has worked with time and mirror images. Her work can take the form of mirrored space with infinite perspectives. The mirror opens like a space to other spaces in, for example "Fire Flies on the water"<sup>24</sup>. There is no beginning and no end. As a viewer you find yourself in an eternity in a place where time is a whole and singular entity. I had the privilege to experience this work in an exhibition at the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam and this work gave me a sense of limitlessness, which for me suggests parallel realities.

**Kader Attia** is a young French-Algerian artist who, among other things, also works with mirrors. The installation "Holy Land", during its first exhibition, consisted of hundreds of almost man-sized mirrors and was made for an architectural and landscape biennial at El Cotillo beach, located on the Spanish island of Fuerteventura. The installation can be seen on You Tube<sup>25</sup>. Here the mirrors are positioned at 90 degree angles to the beach, which slopes slightly. The mirrors are shaped like doorways and they are also perceived as places you can enter. In this case, enter, is the same as travelling across the sea and I interpret the mirror installation as gateways to another reality. In a variation of the work on the internet<sup>26</sup> there is a smaller group of mirrors in a grove. Here I associate this to tombstones while at the same time the reclining mirrors are openings to another world. The slope means that you do not experience these openings as spatial in the same way as those on

23 Koskinen Maret, *Spel och Speglingar*, Sthlm. Univ. 1993 (Doctoral Dissertation)

24 Kuasama Yayoi; Exhibition Boijmanns Rotterdam 23 aug.-19 okt.. 2008

25 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7nne8NI9sw0>

26 <http://www.artslant.com/ew/events/show/117015-holyland> 20120105

the beach. They show rather a picture of where the dead have gone through a portal that the viewer can pass. But both variants of mirror images are found in my own mirror work in the category of parallel realities.

**Tarkovsky** worked with mirror images in the movie *The Mirror*.<sup>27</sup> In his work, I can also see the mirror as a gateway, but as a gateway to one's own mind. Memories are presented in non-chronological order as fragments of a story, as gateways, but to an inner space. The mirror images I perceived as memories worked in a similar fashion.

**Dan Graham**<sup>28</sup> often sets mirrors opposite each other to describe a subject - object relationship or a relationship between the self and the other. I tried this type of mirroring quite late in the project. When a mirror was shown through another mirror, the external mirror became, for me, a portal and through the internal mirror there could, of course, be another portal, but I mostly interpreted it as a mirror with a message. In the dependency between the mirrors something completely new was conveyed.

The God Tezcatlipoca is found in the stories of the American Indians. His attribute is the mirror. "Tezcatlipoca is the Smoking Mirror. He is the God of the nocturnal sky, God of the ancestral memory, God of time and the Lord of the North, the embodiment of change through conflict." Tezcatlipoca gives people spiritual eyes and the smoke from his mirror conveys message<sup>29</sup> Tezcatlipoca also occurs in Smith's text and in Suzaan Boettger's text about Robert Smithson's Mirror travel in the Yucatan. In this myth, I found a parallel to my own message-bearing mirrors.

Since the mirror plays a part in the myths of almost all cultures, it also has a natural place as a linguistic metaphor. Not only the mirror itself, but

also many of the words associated with mirrors and mirroring. The title of my previous work, Reflection points, is such a linguistic metaphor, reflection, an otherness, the mirror both reflects the sun and casts shadows. In myths the mirror can be seen as a messenger of light,<sup>30</sup> as well as a truth-teller and as a seducer in the myth of Narcissus. Synonyms for mirror image include reflection, but also the words like reproduction and replica. Instead of a mirror of the landscape, we can talk about the replication of the landscape. In the interpretations of my own mirror experiments, metaphors were important. Reflection and reminiscence in context of the category of memories. Replication in conjunction with parallel worlds.

In his text *Of Other Spaces*<sup>31</sup> Foucault describes the mirror image as an intermediate experience, something that is not a heterotopia and not a utopia, or something that is both. A heterotopia is a kind of parallel world. The retreat is such a parallel world, as well as the child's playhouse, which was the starting point in a previous art project, *Behind the Closed Door*. The heterotopia is a world in the world with different ordering of time and norms that differ from the rest of society. A utopia can be described as a kind of dream world. Foucault describes the mirror image of a utopia because it is a place without a place. In a way it does not exist. At the same time, he describes it as a heterotopia because the mirror exists in reality and reflects back the place in which I actually stand. It makes the place where I find myself, in the moment I see myself in the mirror, absolutely real and absolutely unreal, since, in order to be perceived, it must pass through a virtual point over there. Both the heterotopia and utopia have other timelines than the world and society in general, and both could be described as parallel worlds or othernesses. When Foucault's text came my way, as it did after the pilot project, I thought he was describing exactly what I tried to capture but still could not isolate precisely and describe in my own words.

27 Berg Magnus, Munkhammar Birgit (eds.). Tarkovskij en antologi

28 Werness. Hope. B. The symbolism of mirrors in art from ancient times to the present. 1999 p.170-171

29 <http://www.azteccalendar.com/god/Tezcatlipoca.html> 20120105

30 See footnot 23.

31 Michel Foucault, *Andra Rum i Diskursernas kamp* 2008 p. 249

## The categories of pilot project

### Reflections perceived as stages or scenes

The spy mirrors captured landscape images from a distance which provided a certain view of the landscape. Both the subjects and mirror placement were important. The self-conscious gaze arose from the mirror image creating a stage for events, an expectation of a performance. As previously mentioned, there were no ambitions to create art in the pilot. Most of the photos describing this category were taken at a great distance. The point of departure was that they would have no interesting creative potential, but I saw that the angles could be developed further. One of these pictures worked perfectly. It was connected to the other categories which were more metaphysical. It showed a double reflection; in the internal mirror hung a thin white fabric like a curtain pulled away. In the mirror I saw a blue sky, a large white cloud and branches from a tree. The light from the mirror was strong, yet it cast a shadow. The first external mirror was my gateway to the mirror with the cloud. The light in the outside mirror was completely different, more like twilight. The inner mirror was pretty far back in the space that was created by the first mirror. Above the internal mirror, with the cloud, a space was created, a stage, waiting for its players. My associations went to Moses and his encounter with the burning bush<sup>32</sup>.

## Memories

Memory is a recurring theme in my artistic work, not only in this mirror project. My dictionary of philosophy,<sup>33</sup> referring back to Plato, describes memory as a reminder of eternal ideas. The word recollection is important in this mirror experience. As mirroring is inherently a reflection of something that has been delineated and put into a new context. Every artist knows that a picture frame held up to the surroundings enhances the experience of the selected area. A mirror image not only deli-

32 Exodus.3

33 Politikens filosofilexicon. 1983

mits, it also moves the image delimitation to a

new location. This is very similar to what happens when you remember something. When I stood before the mirror in the landscape, the mirror image of the landscape in front of me, it reflected the landscape behind me and in this way, the experience referred to memory. The experience of memories was most interesting when it was not specified, or bound to any special memories, but rather when the memory fragments fluttered by without analysis.

## Parallel worlds and magical mirrors

I choose to write about magic, message-bearing mirrors and parallel worlds simultaneously because I can see that they are both about the same thing and they are both the reason I dwelt on the mirrors. Parallel worlds occur often in science fiction. The concept means that there is more than one reality or timeline. The theory has its roots in the more classical ideas of alternative realities or dimensions<sup>34</sup> found in the Bible, the Koran, the Torah, the Vedas, or in authors like Plato, CS Lewis, Astrid Lindgren, Lewis Carroll, and even in Greek and Norse mythology. In parallel worlds different time perceptions and chronologies are played against each other. The passage of time is contrasted with infinity and time as a single unit.

Latin Church Father Augustine sees time linearly but says that then, now and later are man's subjective experiences. These are phenomena that emerge based on his memory and expectation, and are experienced from perception. God, however, exists in his eternal now and in that place all events are simultaneous.<sup>35</sup>For me personally, the mirror image is often an experience of time as whole and undivided. This fascinates me. Mirror images act as representations of spiritual experience. With that claim, my work must be related to the Romantics. I believe that the spiritual expe-

34 [http://sv.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parallella\\_världar](http://sv.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parallella_världar) 20110125

35 <http://sv.wikipedia.org/wiki/Augustinus> 20110218





*Scene for meetings*

rience is human but can be affirmed or rejected. I would not say that there must be a divine experience. It can also involve a strong experience of sharing someone else's world,

*"Suddenly I realized that at our sad yard there had been a completely different world than my own and in a vanishing moment I got access to it"*<sup>36</sup>.

These othernesses can be perplexing experiences. In the summer, I live by the sea in Bohuslän. The following is quoted from my notebook:

*In the house by the sea, the transformation takes place every evening at dusk. At the very hour when the light outside is slightly stronger than indoors. It takes place in the spring and especially in summer. When the light outside is so strong that all walls are seen against the light, then the house transforms. It loses its heaviness and every wall in all directions becomes a backdrop. A thin piece of skin on the world. It feels as if the house is so light that it could be lifted off its foundation and leave me with no protection from the sky and ocean outside.*

*In this hour, time ticks loudly even though there is no clock. The expanse of time becomes clear, nevertheless everything transpires simultaneously and all times and places are present.*

36 Anna-lill Nilsson. Bakom den stängda dörren. 2002



*Frost and moon*

*In the hall mirror, you can see the sea and the sky, close and far away. You can always see the sky in the house by the sea. This is the house's idea. That it will reveal the starry sky and the ambling of the moon as well as the sunrise and sunset.*

I have tried to capture this experience in drawings and photographs without success. The mirror image is the closest I can get. Not because resembles it. It does not at all, but the mirror image can convey the same magical feeling.

### Tezcatlipoca's mirror

Some lonely lakes in northern Dalsland, called Marsjöarna became the site for further investigation. It was late, both in terms of the day and the onset of autumn. Darkness fell quickly. The cold came and the area turned icy. The mist rose from the warm water and the mirrors fogged over and were covered at the edges by a thin crust of ice.

*"Tezcatlipoca gives people spiritual eyes and the smoke from his mirror conveys messages."*<sup>37</sup>

Who cares if the smoke came from the fire in *Chichen Itza*<sup>38</sup> or from the lake mist in northern Dalsland? Tezcatlipoca's mirror rose from the ground on the border between earth and water. I saw it through an external mirror that was my portal.

The darkness was creeping in and the moon rose. I went back three times.

### The seven messengers

The mirrors rose out of the water slightly reclined and reflected opposites. The dark mirror images gave bright mirror reflections in the water. Six of the seven mirrors had a stripe of light that was missing in the mirror reflections in the water. The seventh mirror was completely dark. The lake was almost completely calm. The mirrors turned into a formation which indicated direction.

37 Werness, Hope, B., The symbolism of mirrors in art from ancient times to the present. 1999

38 Situated in Yucatán and is the location for one of Smithson's mirror travels.



*Tezcatlipoca's mirror*



*The seven messengers*



*The seven dreams*



*The seven light bearers*

### The seven dreams

I saw the forest reflected in the mirrors and the mirrors reflected in the water. I studied the forest in the mirrors. It was not as compact, it let the light through. The forest was denser to the left. To the right it opened up. The mirrors were out in the water, practically square-shaped, almost forming rectangles together with their reflected halves. Between the mirrors one could see the water as pale blue lines. Together they formed a movement that was enhanced by the two outer mirrors on the right side with bright reflections in the water, unlike the others that had dark ones. If you looked at the pale blue lines, you could almost not see that half of the rectangle was the mirror image reflected in the water. The mirrors with reflected images transformed to cut-outs or openings in the landscape. The dark woods provided a sharp contrast between the surface of the water and the mirror images. Light – dark, open – closed, surface – space.

### The seven light bearers

Now the mirrors were placed differently. They stood in a row but were shifted in depth. The sun set and



02.20

the evening came. It was dark, but the mirrors shone in the darkness. They were all almost white except the mirror that was furthest out in the water. It was black. The reflections in the water were bright from all the mirrors. The mirrors seemed to move from the water onto land. They moved to the left and forward. They were on their way. The darkness on the land was compact.

## 02.20

The image 2.20 shows a square mirror in the snow. In this mirror, inside and outside were quite clear. There was a space inside the mirror and another outside it. The mirror cast a shadow behind itself and a bright reflection forwards and to the side. The shadow was shorter than the light reflection and together, they could be interpreted as the hands of a clock. There were tracks in the snow towards the mirror, which continued into the mirror image as far as I could see.

## Sun Angels

Suddenly, at any time in life, one may experience the feeling of a presence. It can be done through different lighting conditions, a breeze or a 'sun angel'. My daughter and I were talking about angels. Angels are not in the quantifiable world. I told her about a bright reflection from a mirror named 'sun angel'<sup>39</sup> because in the context of that experience, it functioned as an angel. A few days later I received a text message from my daughter. It said, "I have seen one"! Later she told me that a small Sun angel appeared in her everyday life. The experience was not diminished when it was eventually understood as a reflection of sunlight in a piece of jewelry.

It's about being receptive and heeding Viktor E. Frankels<sup>40</sup> call to give life a meaning. The mirror gives me an opportunity to shape these expe-

39 Note that in Swedish, an expression used (esp. by children) to describe the light reflected by, eg a mirror, is sol katt, which literally means 'sun cat' – sun angel is thus a partly a play on this expression.

40 Viktor E. Frankl Livet måste ha en mening 1980

periences that are otherwise so elusive and impossible to pin down

## Nature, culture and Romanticism

When I started thinking about my choice to place the mirrors in nature, I also began brooding over my relation with Romanticism. My relationship to the Romantic epoch is ambivalent. The role of the artist as the God-given genius is for me completely alien and the images that are usually presented as examples of Romanticism are too grandiose. For me, the sublime is about finding the extraordinary in the ordinary. I can relate to Goethe's description of nature as the mirror of the soul as well as his focus on individual experience. But the Romantic infatuation for a return to nature and a belief in some kind of naturalness in humans, along with the obsession for primitivism, are completely foreign to me. Nor am I comfortable with its emphasis on emotions and imagination. The experience of mirror fascination is that gaps in being and openings to other realities actually exist, so the word imagination can hardly be used by those experiencing it. Mysticism, however, works well, but it can of course be seen as "fantasy" for those who are outside the mystical experience. To me, life is measured more in relation to nature than culture and by that I mean that there is a core of existence that is not in constant change. Gravity affects our bodies and we cannot fly. We are bound to the earth. We are born and we die. Death is inevitable. There is night and there is day, there is ebb and there is flood. These are laws we cannot escape. There's something solid, something outside of ourselves, which we cannot control, and which will certainly survive us. We claim that we destroy nature! Not really though, it will get on just fine, but what we destroy are the conditions for our civilization, for our culture and that is something completely different. Nature is bound to adapt to new conditions and develop without us. Because mankind belongs to both nature and culture, we can of course be reflected in both. I consider that merely using culture as a mirror is

denying half of what we are as humans.

I find more men than women that I can directly place in the landscape of Romanticism. My interest in phenomena allows me to find a kindred spirit in Olafur Eliasson<sup>41</sup>, who, incidentally, also worked with mirrors. Richard Berghs<sup>42\*</sup> paintings and expressions of metaphysics have been important. Robert Smithson is interesting in many ways, his mirror-work of course, but also his interest in science, history and time. Jan Håfström<sup>43</sup> must also be mentioned as a significant Swedish artist and with him Arnold Böcklin<sup>44\*</sup>. Among women, in this collection of role models, I can mention Ann Edholm<sup>45</sup>, Ana Mendieta<sup>46</sup> and Lenke Rothman without presuming to place these artists in the context of Romanticism. There are other things that tie them together; the landscapes of Ana Mendieta, mysticism in Ann Edholm and Lenke Rothman<sup>47</sup>

## Uddevalla harbor

Working with the mirrors on the lakes of Marsjöarna was a fantastic nature experience for me.

In order to avoid working exclusively with nature and to investigate if the subject in itself had any significance in my mirror experiences, I worked with the mirrors in Uddevalla harbor during the summer of 2010. The place had an urban atmosphere with traces of old industrial usage in

41 Eliasson Olafur (b. 1967 in Copenhagen, Denmark) is a Danish-Icelandic artist known for sculptures and large-scale installation art. Wikipedia 20111205

42\* Bergh, (b. 1858 in Stockholm, d.1919) was a Swedish artist, arts writer and museum director. Wikipedia 20111205

43 Håfström Jan has been called one of the great Romanticists in Swedish contemporary art. Wikipedia 20111205

44\* Böcklin Arnold, was one of the foremost representatives of symbolism, but perhaps he is most well-known for his Isle of the dead, which has five variants. Wikipedia 20111205

45 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WYBp9HAjPeQ> 20120901

46 [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ana\\_Mendieta#Life\\_and\\_Work](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ana_Mendieta#Life_and_Work) 20120901

47 Lenke Rothman, 1995

which nature and junk fought for control. There was a lot of traffic, both in terms of heavy trucks and boats. Construction was also taking place in the area.

The experience of mirror images in terms of content was not significantly affected by the change in location. This may be because, with the help of the camera, I still integrated nature into the images of the urban environments, or because things/artifacts can convey experiences similar to those of nature.

Sublime experiences sometimes balance between a grand experience and a simultaneous sense of dread. A double reflection from Uddevalla harbor was beautiful, but also disturbing. A large truck passes from right to left in a mirror. The outer mirror has cracked. The landscape no longer fits together. The parts are displaced in relation to each other. The inner mirror is light and dark like the sky before a thunderstorm. It is also cracked. The right corner looks remarkably dark. The contrast is great. This mirror image represents uneasiness for me! I wanted to develop that imagery and make it less concrete, more like a feeling. Until that time, all the images had been strictly factual representations, but here I tested, with the help of Photoshop, using two pictures superimposed on



*Street lamp*



*The boat*





Original image



Two superimposed images



The same image in black and white



*One of the mirror images from the broken mirrors at Uddevalla harbor.*

each other and I also tried the picture in a black and white version. With two images superimposed, the picture became more diffuse, but less disturbing. Watered down, you could say. The black and white image was also diffuse but retained more of the uneasiness. There is a movement in the trees that emerged clearly in the black and white image, that sweeping wind that comes just before a storm. The contrasts are drawn to extremes. Carbon black contrasts with blinding white.

The expressions in these images are those closest to the landscapes of Romanticism with their mix of beauty and danger.

## The development of the research questions

The experience that mirror images are able to transform time and transport the place elsewhere, stayed with me through the whole process, but another question also began to take shape. How

did I view the relationship between the observer and the mirror image?

New questions took shape:

*How can I invite a viewer to share my mirror experiences and mirror discoveries without pictures?*

*What is the art here, the installations or the documentations of the installations?*

## Standing in front of the mirror

My work clearly showed that photographs were important to me, but they are not the best way to share the mirror experience. The pictures gave me an opportunity to determine a certain angle in a certain moment and I wanted to continue working with that. At the same time, I felt a need to try other channels. I started videotaping. Filming provided new opportunities for both spatiality and timeline. The sound recording could in itself provi-

de spatial experiences. But I wanted to go further.

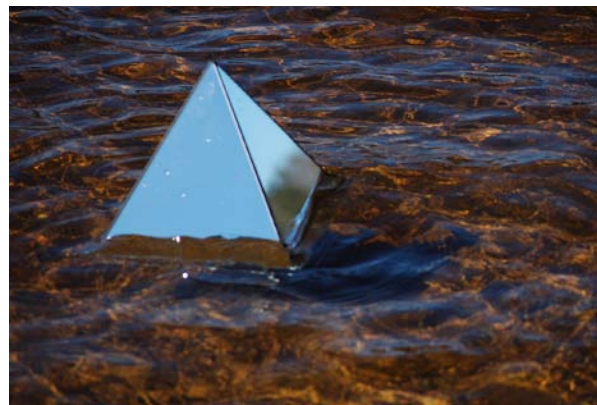
At this time point in my project I had worked with mirrors on the water. How would it be possible to offer a viewer a way to stand before the mirror without my direct involvement? Since the last mirrors were photographed in water, I started wondering if the mirrors could float. Which mirror shapes would float? Three and four-sided pyramids, dodecahedra, and cubes might float. The pyramid would be stable by being heaviest in the base. I made a mirror pyramid 30 inches high filled with Styrofoam mounted on Plexiglas. Would it float? I took it to the nearest lake. There was a long chain attached to the bridge foundation on the beach and I tied the string from the pyramid to this and went out into the water as far as I could and released the pyramid. It floated perfectly!

The big difference compared with the standing mirrors was their movement. The mirrors flashed by like a cavalcade of memories. From far away, you could also see mostly sky, but there was something about the pyramid that was definitely appealing.

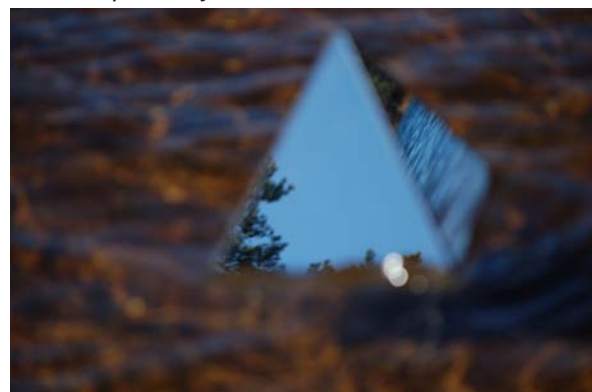
I often dream about houses. Small houses and big houses. Houses with only one room and houses with mazes and lots of rooms. I've actually had a dream about a floating house. I made mental associations to the architecture and the location. The Egyptian pyramids, vast tombs, appeared in my head, like Mayan pyramid buildings as the foundation of temples. The Mayan Indians also had pyramids that showed their calendar. These associations were enough for me to continue. The pyramid was floating and it related to my other work in that it highlighted space, associated to time and meeting with the gods, while at the same time speaking of transience and death. The pyramid is an overloaded theme, just like the mirror theme in art is an overloaded topic. For me it was still important to hold on to what interests me as a person and artist, aware of the many who have researched this before. I chose to go ahead with the quadrilateral pyramid because it was the form that best provided the most associations to archi-



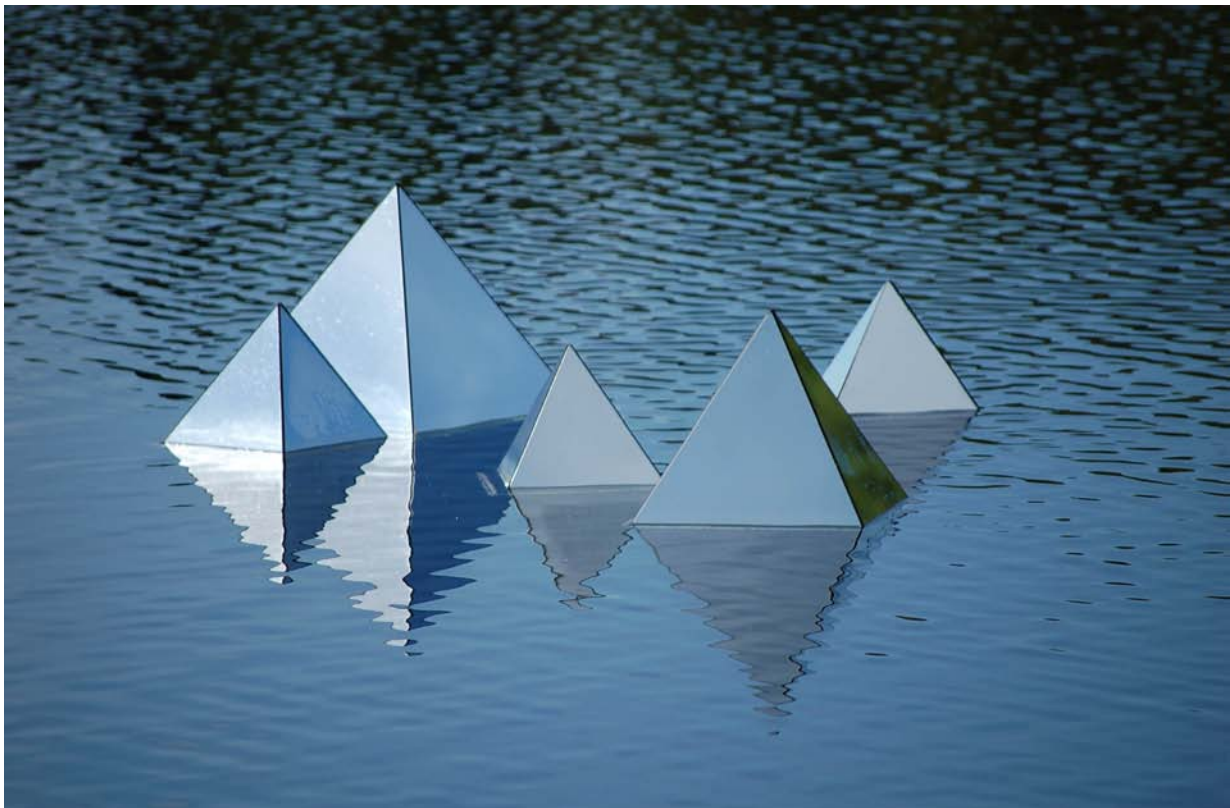
*The sign*



*It floated perfectly*



*And it was spinning the whole time*



*Floating reflections (first attempt), 2010*

ecture. Pyramids in water was something new in the project. They came out of the process, from the need to get the mirrors to manage on their own. Pyramids on land were more like the standing mirrors.

In conjunction with an interim report on the project, I launched five pyramids of various sizes in the lake below the Steneby School of Craft and Design in Dals Långed. They floated around for a week there, reflecting mostly the sky but sometimes catching some thickets of reeds or a tree on the beach. I got a text message from a colleague the first night after the works were placed in the water: the pyramids are magical! There was something both in the closed vertical shape and the movement that was spellbinding. I videotaped them. A positive effect of the location was that, because of currents, the pyramids were constantly wandering back and forth, especially in a north

- south direction. They switched places while spinning around their own axis. It was a completely different movement than that which would later be explored in the sea and the lake. Through their movement in the water, the pyramids spoke of the relationship between object and viewer. I would love to try them in rapid-flowing water again, but in a narrower body of water than the lake below the Steneby School of Craft and Design. The video documentation, which I also showed at the Steneby art gallery, worked better than the installation. The pyramids were too few and too small for the large watercourse. The film was eventually named *Floating reflections*.

## Pyramid Progress

In February 2011 I made my first pyramid attempt to use standing pyramids on land. The lakes were frozen. The place I chose was an old industrial area. A pile of snow was the starting point for my experiments. I placed the 26 pyramids in the snow drifts and immediately came to think of crystals.

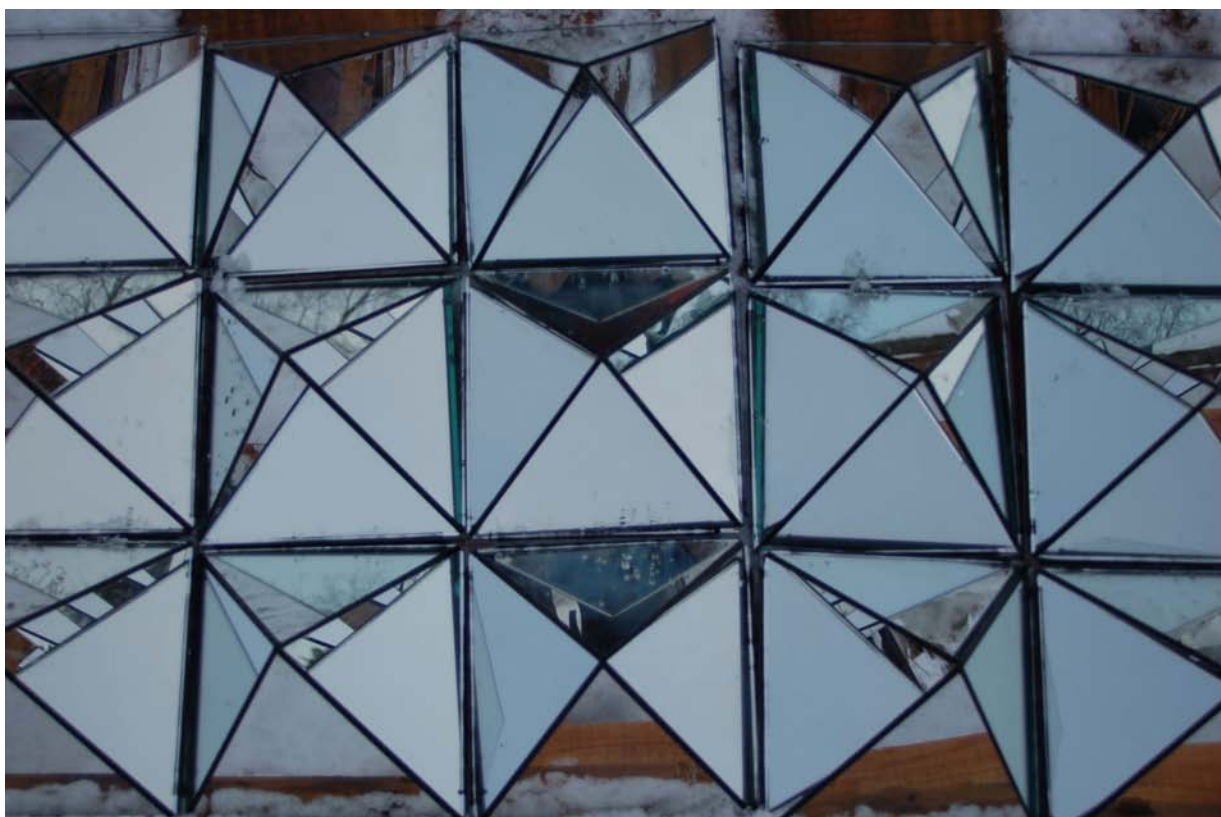
I had put a great deal of effort into separating my objectives from Robert Smithson's ideas. Now I did not see pyramids any longer but rather crystals. Besides mirrors, Smithson also worked with crystals in various ways. Several of his early sculptures have crystal forms and he also spoke of crystalline time, a frozen eternity.<sup>48</sup> In my work there had not been a single notion of crystals, even if I have seen that pyramids with their reflections together formed diamond shapes in still water. What had I really done? Pyramids worked

48 Roberts Jennifer L. Smithson and Stephens in Yucatán, Mirror – Travels. 2004 p.39

for me, something like crystal balls with present, future and ancient worlds. This is not the way Smithson viewed his crystals. Overall, he very rarely tried to capture entire images of anything in his mirror reflections.

When I thought of Smithson, it was of course in connection with that which is described in images 1 and 2, where I let the pyramids build larger forms but also in image number 3. There I saw the crystals as melting ice which is beginning to move. As a release of energy from the crystalline to the unbound into a movement in time. Exactly the opposite of Smithson's ambitions but with clear references to it and with something completely different than what I had imagined.

My pyramids were anything but tranquil. They were closed and open at the same time. They opened up at every movement to the viewer as gateways to new worlds and in some cases I even



*Crystals 1*



*Image number 2: Reflected Crystals*



*Image number 3: Crystals in motion*



*Crystals on the move*



*mage number 4: Glowing inner world*



*World within a world*

felt that they were more than reflectors, there really was a world in there, like in image 4 where the uppermost pyramid glows as if there were an inner light.

From my diary, February 7, 2011:

*My thoughts have revolved around Smithson and his crystals for a whole night. In the morning I suddenly saw Gaston Bachelard's book, the Poetics of Space on the shelf. I read about daydreams, "When a relaxed spirit meditates and dreams, immensity seems to expect images of immensity. The mind sees and continues to see objects, while the spirit finds the nest of immensity in an object."<sup>49</sup>When I went out to take a new round of photographs, the daydreams collided with the crystals. Crystals, crystal receivers! Clearly my pyramids are crystals that receive and reflect light waves (instead of sound waves) from near and far, from then, now and later. "An image becomes an image that becomes yet another image"<sup>50</sup> I have 33 crystal receivers for daydreams. Large and small, in water and on land, they search for light waves to transform into a never-ending stream of worlds.*

Receiver is a good name even though they are also transmitters. Martin Buber said "there's no me without you." These objects are definitely not sculptures. They are nothing in themselves. They are strictly dependent. It is only in this relationship that they work. They must have a 'you' and a 'that', a place and a viewer, to exist. Then they are constantly receiving and constantly transmitting. Later I became unsure of the word daydream. Daydreams may be too sloppy in the context. It fits well with the word imagination. My experience is different. For me it is more about transcendence, about how something beyond the senses takes shape, takes form and emerges as meaningful. Imagination is of course a part of the process but wonder is a more important word for me. Imagination is an energetic, creative, active force whereas wonder is a state of sheer amazement and quiet

contemplation. Imagination is close to the word creativity and is useful when solving problems, but in this context, the focus falls more on the individual's ability to create images than on the phenomena that arise. In the phenomenological process, the subject and the phenomenon are impossible to distinguish, but for me it is very important that the object, the thing, the mirror and the phenomenon of the mirror image, is the starting point.

A sublime experience is about wonder, likewise the experience of transcendence. Wonder feels like a somewhat smaller word, a more intimate word in the context, than sublime and transcendent. But mirror experiences move in that triad.

## New experiments

A few miles from where we live is our old summer house which we sold long ago. The people who bought it have probably not been there since that first summer at least 15 years ago. The forest has grown high above the entrance and the house is in a bad state. I brought a few pyramids or crystal receivers there.

It was a strange meeting. It was a chilly, slightly wet day and the mirrors fogged up and froze. They captured the house, the road and each other, and transmitted misty secrets. I got the most interesting results from a video which I later called Crystal receivers. I consistently chose to try to keep the camera still. Because it became a sort of still-life, it made the movement that occurred inside the pyramids extra powerful. The receivers captured and sent both the house and the woods and even a passing truck. At certain angles you could see the trees move inside the receiver. Exactly that kind of thing evokes a sense of wonder in me.

I return to the words daydreams and transcendences. The latter sounds less appealing but is actually more accurate. Crystal receivers for transcendences it is, until further notice.

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49 Bachelard Gaston. The Poetics of Space. 1994.

50 Expression by professor and designer HC Ericson





*Light in the forest*



*The path*



*Sleepy house*



*A world of crystal receivers, Malmö*



*Populated, Malmö*

To find shallow open water in March, I had to go to Malmö. The seven floating pyramids were put out into the water, and the twenty-six mirrors were placed on the beach.

The place I chose was far from the city center. Old industrial sites interspersed with new areas of construction. The difference between the five pyramids in the lake and the seven on the ocean was striking. The two large pyramids really felt much bigger and they fared well in the sea. Many passers-by came down to the beach and talked about what they saw. Several asked if they could take pictures, if the installation would remain. Some just came down and said, "It's so beautiful." There was a steady stream of people all day. Here I achieved what I had wanted in the observers. They were able to explore the reflections on their own. People came, went home and came back. Many stood at a distance and watched. Others came down and walked around among the pyramids. Some even crawled on all fours and photographed very close to them. What people experienced, I have no idea. I did not ask. "Beautiful," was perhaps the word I heard most. However, I understood that people were clearly fascinated by the events on the beach. The misty winter pictures showing our old house felt more transcendent, but wonder also stirred in these mirrored warehouses, lampposts, gulls and sea.

Despite the successful effort, I was not happy with the location. If you wanted to see the surroundings reflected in the floating pyramids you needed to go out in the water and get quite close to them. For the mirrors to work as I intended, it would take a smaller body of water with a more enclosed environment. My desire to try the pyramids in such a place solved itself.

From my diary:

*This summer I will be participating in the Bottna Land Art project with my Crystal Receivers for transcendence. Here I have the opportunity to really experience how the audience experiences*

*the mirrors in nature. I hope I can find a place with sufficiently dense vegetation so that the pyramids may reflect the terrain even when floating in the water. My ambition is to film mirror pyramids at least once a week and more frequently if the weather changes. Somewhere else in Bottna, I would like to show an ever-developing movie on a flat screen TV.*

## Bottna Land Art

Diary notes, 5/7 – 28/8

5/7

*5/7 My pyramids are to be placed in the pond at Hogsämleden. The pond is about as long as it is wide and is now filled with water lilies. It was not like that when I chose the place. There are three small islands which are covered with bog moss. Some small pine trees are also growing on the islands. One of the islands is grassland. Today I cleaned the branches from the previous clearings so it should be easy to walk down to the water. I will not remove trees or shrubbery. I want it to be just as overgrown as it is. The pond can be seen from three points. From two of them, the most accessible ones, you see only half the pond, but from the third point, which is four or five meters into the forest, you can see the entire lake.*

*Previously, I have placed the pyramids in groups, but here I want to spread the elements across the pond. The pyramids are alien forms in the forest environment and I want to underline that. I also want to make it clear that the pyramids are a sort of instrument for reflection and transcendence. They should stick out of the water here and there as alien artifacts. At the same time they also specify points in the pond, like coordinates on a map. They reflect the surroundings and derive their value by transforming the place for the viewer.*

*8/7 The pyramids are now in place, seven floating and one on the land. A family of mallards lives in the pond. There are plenty of water snakes, tadpoles and small fish. The vegetation is dense and high, just like I wanted. Closest to the lake there are some deciduous trees and further away there is a patch of mixed forest. The pyramids mirror the vegetation and send reflections of light among the bushes and trees. I have previously discussed the*

*pyramidal shape. It works well here in this decidedly organic environment. It provides the contrast I want, as a starting point for the reflections. A visitor was fascinated by the reflected sunlight. They become triangles of light that move through the scrub vegetation and tree trunks. The diamond shapes created by the pyramids fascinated some visitors. In the black water, it is difficult to determine what the mirror image is. One can easily see a number of diamonds standing on their tips.*

*13/7 I made the first film, and it is showing at KKV-Bohuslän,<sup>51</sup> which is also the source of the Land Art exhibition. The viewing positions at the lake are well trodden.*

*Tonight I continued filming. It was close to eight in the evening and the sun was low. This was a totally different light than last time. There were almost no reflections at all, but rather very clear mirrorings in the water. Everything was green. Forest pigeons cooed in the woods. Before I left, a four-legged audience arrived. A moose wanted to drink water or maybe she wanted to reflect.*

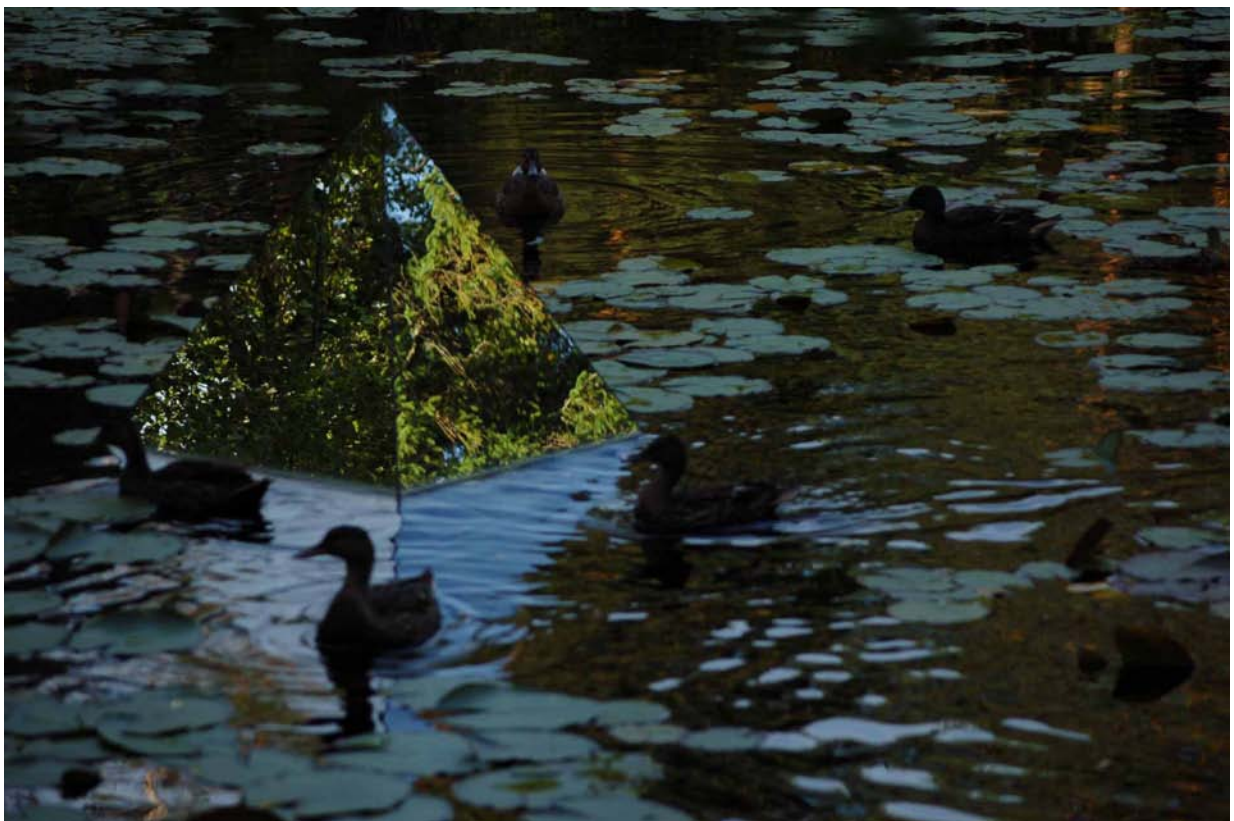
*15/7, it was time for some new documentation. It was rainy and basically calm, but occasionally with the rain came gusts of wind. The pyramids moved less than usual, and the images of them were blurred in the rain. The ducks lie next to the pyramid on the land with no concern. I capture some pyramids standing almost completely still. Some are stunningly beautiful but chilly, rigid. There just might be something to Smithsonian's speech on crystals and frozen time.*

*22/7 I'm on my way to the lake and see immediately that something is wrong. The large pyramid is not in its place. After a while I see it further along the lake and in the forest. I have it towed from there. I put it in the boathouse and the next day I pick it apart, wipe it clean, cut off the silicone, make a new attachment for a rope and glue it together with a more waterproof glue. At nine o'clock in the evening, the glue has hardened and the pyramid*

51 KKV-Bohuslän = Konstnärernas Kollektivverkstad Bohuslän, The Artist's Collective Workshop in Bohuslän.



*Hogsâm*



*Ducks and the instalation*

is launched again. The balance of pond is restored. The pyramid does some quick pirouettes as if it were happy to be back.

24/7 New documentation. It is difficult to find new angles when I shoot, but when I look at the clips afterwards, the light is different as well as the colors. I want to stick to my goal of making a film every week. When the exhibition is over, I cut them together into a movie with old clips. A family with children comes to the lake. They go past the first lookout where I stand and stop at the other. I hear them talking, "look, there're mirrors," says the mother, "check out the ducks looking in the mirrors," replies the boy, "cool," continues his father!

25/7 Took the car to the lower parking lot today. It was completely full so I had to park on the road. All pyramids were in place and I regretted not having the camera. There was a dense rain today. The mirror images were blurred by the rain and they looked like paintings by Gerhard Richter<sup>52</sup>. Each pyramid had a skin of sparkling water drops.

27/7 Sunny weather with no wind is the most boring weather to see the pyramids in. They are absolutely still and merely reflect the light. The form of the pyramids becomes so dominant. In other weather conditions, the reflections, both in the mirrors and in the water, are more dominant.

28/7 Today, I went to the pond at five in the morning to film at a completely new time. The pyramids were covered with dew and completely still. There wasn't a single ripple in the water. Now they were really like crystals. Their chilly grandeur stood in stark contrast to the noises that all the forest birds and insects were making. There was a visual serenity, like in a cemetery, but with a chirping, buzzing and chattering, as if the forest animals were trying to sing at a paean to life. Life and death.....

I didn't find so many new images, but the coolness, the frostiness was different along with the great sound. It lasted during the hours around sunrise then it died out. The sound was most interesting

when I looked at the clips.

6/8 The last times I visited the pond, the pyramids remained fairly stationary. All but the largest one, which tore away from its tether a week ago. I guess the ropes on the others got entangled in lily stalks and that reduced their mobility. The big pyramid kept dancing on.

8/8. Met two visitors at the lake, a man and a woman. I realized that the woman brought the man to the lake to show him the installation. She said she returned to the site again and again. "It is so fascinating," she said, "that the reflection in the water is so perfect that you become unsure of what is the form and what is the reflection."

"The funny thing is that different things can be reflected in the actual pyramid and the mirror image of it. When you look for a while you aren't sure what you are seeing. It is precisely that – that you are no longer sure of what you're seeing, that is the interesting thing," she said.

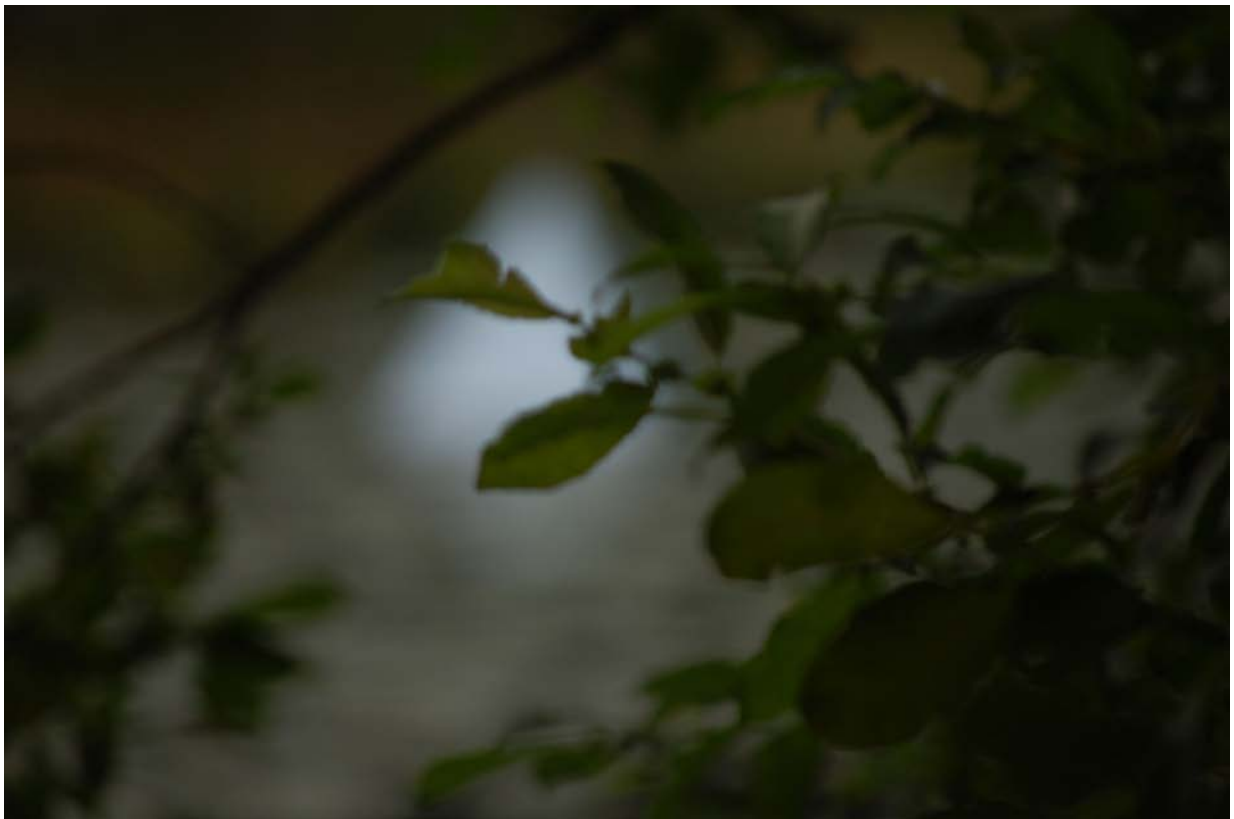
It was only the largest pyramid that really spun today; the others only squirmed gently back and forth.

9/8 The camera was acting up today. There was something strange about the zoom and I didn't really feel like shooting. It was getting hard not to repeat the same things I'd already done. Late afternoon sun and wind, I'd seen it before. I rigged up the tripod and set the camera on it. The path to viewing points was pretty worn out. There must have been lots of people there. I saw that the ducks had gone ashore on the island with the standing pyramid. They preened themselves and strutted. I did not know if they saw me, but suddenly they lifted one by one and came flying straight at me. The ducks landed where I stood and began to swim before me. They swam so that they passed the mirror image of the largest pyramid and the ducks' reflections were extremely clear on the silvery surface. It was as if the ducks had chosen to show off.

I listened to a previously broadcast summer pro-



*Transcendent in the dark*



*Diffuse*

gram today via the computer. It was Helena Bergström talking about her life. During a period when she was a child, she used a mirror as an entrance to a fantasy world where she play acted, even if she didn't refer to it that way at that time. The mirror opened a door to other spaces.

10/8 I've edited the film. These ducks!

11/8 The ducks apparently had their farewell performance yesterday. Today when I came up to the lake, there was only a single duck there. That had never happened before. I went home and looked in a reference book on birds. It said that mallards often stay the winter in our area but that they migrate to southern Europe between August and November.

12/8 Since the video camera was acting up again, I took the opportunity to take photos. Sun and wind today, which meant reflected light and many different kinds of mirror images.

24/8 Now I am 60 miles from my pond and can only hope that everything is working. The last thing that took place before I traveled from there was a tour of Soteleden led by Chatarina Göransson. It was called "seeing with new eyes." The idea was that a biologist, a cultural studies scholar, and the artists themselves would reflect on the works together. I was really impressed by the audience. There were 40-50 people gathered there in the woods.

28/9 I've taken the camera for repairs and removed the pyramids. It was sunny and windy weather. Despite the wind, the pyramids were very still and we saw the pond full of shiny diamonds when we arrived. It's been a fun exhibition and it felt kind of sad to take them away.

30/10 Last Wednesday I edited parts of all the movies into a single movie about 5 minutes long. With this I have completed all the plans I had for the installation at Hogsäm. It is clear and obvious that the overall project is now completed.

This film is closer to the events than the previous

films, and that's a good thing. I had problems with the audio transitions between clips in a few places. It is perhaps hard to get the sound right without completely separating it right from the beginning. I have removed the sound from most clips, but still sought to keep the sound authentic in relation to the images. There are places where the picture and sound work very well together. I showed the film at the last seminar that was linked to Bottna Land Art 2011.

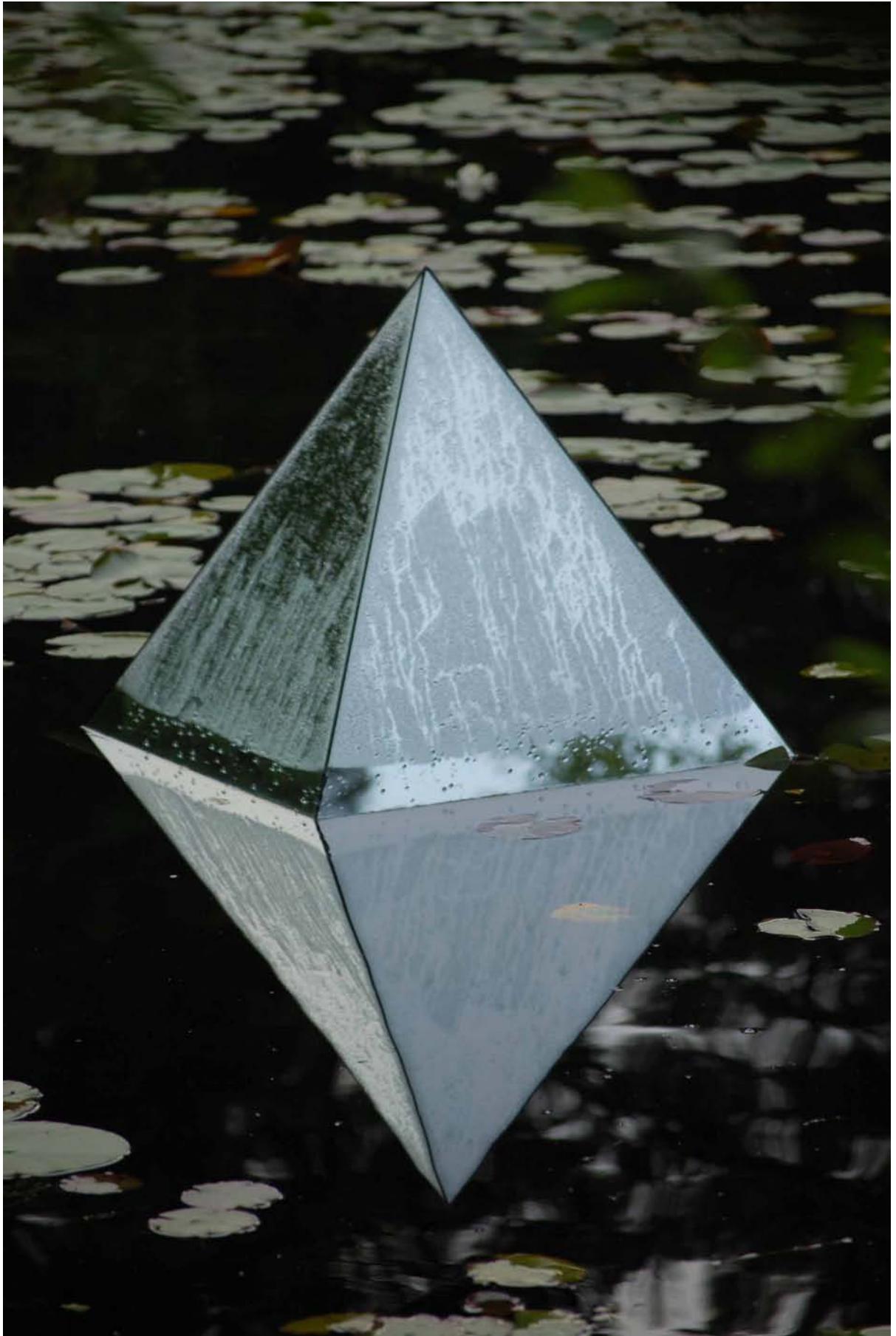
## Reflections

How does the mirror image affect the perception of time and place? After three years among mirrors, reflections and shadows, I am ready to answer the original question. The mirror image creates other spaces! Since *Of other spaces* is also the title of a text by Michael Foucault and that essay deals with, among other things, the mirror image, one can wonder what all this work was for and what its value was. Wouldn't it have been enough to read the text? It's hard to know what would have happened if I had known about the text at the beginning of the project. But I do know there is a big difference in experiencing a phenomenon through the senses, compared to reading a text. When I read the text, I had just completed the pilot project. I could already relate to many mirror experiments. Even so, it took nearly two more years before I could say the answer as briefly and concisely as *Other spaces*. Lacan<sup>53</sup> describes the mirror stage as a way of establishing a connection between the inner world and the outside world. Perhaps the phenomenological process of an artist can be seen the same way.

I would say that, on several levels, the final installation at Hogsäm gave rise to the articulation of other spaces. A visual interpretation differs from an essay by communicating on other levels. The phrase, *other spaces*, is not so far from the made-up word *othernesses* that I have used from time to time in this text. At the same time I would say that the process of splitting other spaces into different

53 Matthis et al (eds). *Fyra röster om Jacques Lacan*. 1989.





*The diamond*

kinds of other spaces, i.e. the categorizations, was very important to me. It was through this process that I was able to articulate my mirror fascination, and thus clarify my intentions and identify my goals. To test a qualitative research method like phenomenography in an artistic project was also a way to investigate what artistic research can be. The first part of the project was guided by this method, while the rest of the work was based on phenomenology and was more like the artistic work I usually conduct. The difference for me is in the way to gather and organize information. From Marsjöarna on, I returned to my method, which has a lot of phenomenological influences. Using an external method like phenomenography both facilitated and hindered the work. It made it easier in that I could lean on methodological structure and gather lots of information without evaluating it. This resulted in photographs, which I would not have taken otherwise. Not photos that had particularly good artistic qualities, but rather as a collection of approaches that could be developed further. The problem with the method was the constraint I experienced that all the images should belong to only one category; a requirement which I afterwards understood was completely unreasonable. It was the categories themselves that were important and not really which picture belonged to which category. A picture could belong to multiple categories and the category in which an image worked best depended on the context. This was something I did not deal with in a productive way at the beginning of the project.

Wonder is a key word for me. But my wonder changed occasionally to an energetic imagination which by whatever means possible interpreted the images and attempted to force them into the correct category. With some critical distance to work, I think that it was nevertheless a good introduction which could have been much better with more experience. I really tried many variations and together the devised categories clarified the otherness I feel that mirrored spaces have. All the same, it would have been sad to have finished the work there.

I have previously discussed in the text the subject in the mirror image and claimed that it does not matter. The other spaces appear anywhere. When I finally wanted to show them to an audience, I nonetheless chose nature. It was a wild forest lake full of water lilies, birds and small reptiles – very Romantic. Although the place was not something I fully controlled, it matched very well with my objectives. The lake happened to be there on that particular part of Soteleden that Bottna Land Art had selected. I was thankful for that and hoped that the audience, through the stunning landscape, would open themselves up to sublime experiences and find awe in the hastily rushing spaces in spinning pyramids or the space in the searchlight from a pyramid reflection.

Many artists past and present have worked with mirrors. The answer to the original question was very important to me personally, but it has been answered in different ways by many others before me. My own response led to the next question as to how this could be portrayed to a viewer. In this case, it was the presentation which brought something new in this context. Moving pictures without video. Here you could stand and see how the ever-changing images presented themselves in the rotating mirror pyramids, sometimes slow, sometimes fast-paced. As many pictures as there were pyramids were delivered simultaneously. When the pyramids were perfectly still, the diamonds were generated. The mirror shape and the water reflection interacted to the point that it was difficult to separate them. It was beautiful, contemplative but also surprising and subtle. I hope the installation can inspire inner journeys. The other spaces are both outside us and within us. The inner spaces compel external experiences that open the doors.

From the beginning, I planned to call the pyramids liquid transcendensers but then someone misspelled a sign at the lake, using a 't' instead of an 's', so I decided to change the name. I had wondered about transcender earlier. The word transcendent is used e.g. in mathematics. It is an adjective and describes the characteristics of

numbers; numbers can be transcendent. Some of them can be seen as threshold values. Transcendent is something that exceeds the threshold or normal limits. The word is synonymous with transcendental. A noun was created from the adjective transcendent. It is a new coinage; the word did not exist before. I was thinking that a transcendent would mean someone who converts or transforms, by exceeding limits. The other spaces were created when transcendentals whirled into the pond. They also arose through the reflections in the water when transcendentals were still. They were created through the relationships between the various points, coordinates, which the transcendentals indicated in the pond and they went beyond the place, the pond, through the reflections. The reflected light reached far into the woods and perhaps into our inner space. In a phenomenological approach, it is difficult to distinguish between subject and object. They are in an intimate communication and perhaps the transcendent experience arises when the external and internal spaces are united in the experience of life.

Since the end of the show, I have met many visitors who have seen the exhibition. More than I saw during the time it was running. These people say that they have carried with them the experience into their own daily lives and the mirror has a new meaning as both an object and a metaphor.

The KKV played my movie. The film is documentation. It ran while the pyramids were floating in the pond. The time aspect, simultaneity, was important but is still without language.

## Has phenomenology been my method?

Kvale<sup>54</sup> states that "Phenomenology is a study of the structure and variations in the structure of the mind, for which every object, event or person emerges". In that case, it would mean an investigation of the structure and variations of how the

mirror image (the object) appears to me as an artist. As I wrote in the beginning, I have sought patterns in my own mirror work. Kvale also writes about the objectivity of the method resulting from intentional acts, and fidelity to the investigated phenomena. Under the heading Pyramid progress, I wrote: "In the phenomenological process, the subject and the phenomenon are impossible to distinguish, but for me it is very important that the object, the thing, the mirror and the phenomenon of mirror image, is the starting point of the investigation and not my own ability to create images". Kvale also describes "the observation of essence" in which one goes from describing individual phenomena to seeking their common essence. "The common essence of the individual phenomena" could be the final reflection in my project, where I put together all mirror experiments, and all the readings and conclude, as a way of responding to how the transformation of time and place transpires, that the mirror image creates other spaces. Then, of course, other spaces must be considered against how these are described in my text. There are clear phenomenological overtones in the survey and in its implementation. Seeing the world through a phenomenological lens helped me in defining the project, not least in the new issues that arose along the way.<sup>55</sup> I would say that the phenomenological angle was crucial for the selection of the final presentation format. It was about the realization that the relationship I saw between me and the object, the mirror, in the landscape, could not be reproduced in the photographs. It required a direct meeting between the mirror and the viewer.

In an artistic context, it is my experience so far that external methods can be usefully tested and employed, but they must be modified and used with prudence so that they aid the process.

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54 Kvale, Steinar. Den kvalitative forskningsintervju., 2006, p. 54 (with a reference to Giorgi 1975, p.83)

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55 ee page 24.

## Conclusion

Mirrors in themselves are just emptiness. In the encounter between the observer and the world new spaces, other spaces, are created for those who want to see. *Other spaces* can, of course, be created without mirrors as well, but I can see that it is precisely that possibility that has driven me. A memory emerges; it is a large picture that I made for my children when they were small. It was a giant collage of everyday things, but somewhere in the collage was a door and inside it you found other spaces. It was a landscape of opportunities that provided lots of spatialities towards the infinite space. The collage served as the basis for stories that were created on the spot.

I will certainly use mirrors again, but I now know what it is that interests me with the mirrors, it creates opportunities to seek other expressions of the same thing.

How are *other spaces* created in installations without mirror images?

*Wonder* is the most important word here. This has not changed and I bear with me a few words from a program with Gunnar Ekelöf<sup>56</sup>: “how should we act to maintain freshly cleansed eyes?” In my own words, this would be, “how should we act to live with constantly listening eyes?”<sup>57</sup>

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56 K:Special: Ekelöfs blick SVT 20080625

57 Eriksson Kajsa, who read my text and gave me good advice, read this line incorrectly – she understood the text as glistening eyes. Another thought-provoking interpretation.



*The island*



*Overview*



*Among the lily pads.*



*Morning Hogsäm*



*Noon in Hogsäm*



*Late afternoon*



*Evening in Hogsäm*

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