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THE RISE AND FALL OF BISMARCK

Staffan Boije af Gennäs meets its originator Peter Fend. Fend is in Copenhagen representing OCEAN EARTH in the Charlottenborg group show Art meets Science and Spirituality in a changing Economy

artificial and a falsification of history ... a relatively recent phenomenon. Instead we are interested in the artist who is, among other things, creating foundations for architecture.

We are pione-

SB: In your upcoming exhibition in Copenhagen, are you still basically going to show works based on satellite images?

PF: Well, maybe. I don't really know yet. I think we are going to show some pictures from our Chernobyl project. But we have also been working on the construction of a sea-based rig named Bismarck, which if mass-produced could play a major part in the global energy production. The rig will



Peter Fend/ Ocean Earth

SB: What was the idea behind the foundation of the company OCEAN EARTH?

PF: The company is based on certain ideas of the futurists and the constructivists which were further developed during the sixties. The futurists had the idea of an exact scientific art, an art that is somehow more "true" than some of the expressive art - it can make sites, it can become architectural. It is the idea that if artists come together you can achieve political power, any kind of power.

There is this idea about the artist as this lumpen hero, who is isolated and is somehow a unique troubled individual who has to be celebrated in his own right ... Bruce Nauman has a nervous break down and screams and shouts in the museum of Louisiana "free me help me", and all that kind of stuff ... the artist that has a tormented soul.

We don't accept that. We don't think it is actually the case. We think that this is

ers, of course, some ideas might be a bit over the edge... but we are laying the foundation for new engineering, new architecture, new advertisement, new mass-media, new ... new visual and physical environment. And if you have a few own ideas - being teamed up with each other to achieve more team work ... that is good. You achieve a much larger capacity as a team than you would if you were working alone. I have a good executive capacity in working with architectural projects. But if you ask me to make a video tape I can't do it. Someone else might have a superior capacity for ideas. Taro Suzuki ... most of the ideas of our company as a group of people comes from him. For example, producing satellite images for mass media was his idea.

The dark shapes stretched out beneath us on all sides in the twenty footwater

At the time they did not register as anything but perhaps a continuation of the reef. Then we saw the channel which separates North from South Bimini, and we put up the throttles and moved away from the dark shapes.

Having thought of this first approach to Bimini as symbolic, we had looked all about us, half expecting some immediate proof. Somewhere, we thought, there was a sign, a clue; and yet, despite this feeling, we never had the wit to look



Maura Biava

down to remark to each other, or even to ourselves that those dark shapes which stretched out beneath us had a geometry and order, a peculiar pattern that, unlike a reef, would not make you think of God and Nature, but of a lost ancient civilization.

Ferro/Grumley

be used to grow giant algae - next to sugar-canes the fastest growing plant in the world. From the harvested algae you can produce methane-gas. We intend to show some ideas and perhaps a prototype.

The boys from Superflex came up with the name Bismarck. Of course they knew about the submarine named Yamato that will be used for harvesting the algae. They will probably collaborate with us in the show - I don't know yet to what extent.

SB: How did the Bismarck project come into the world?

PF: The notion we have been working with in this domain was established by Joseph Beuys. The notion of trying to promote this came out of my idea of architecture ... actually from the classical theorist Leon Batista Alberti. A theory about what architecture should do to guarantee clean air for example, or clean water.

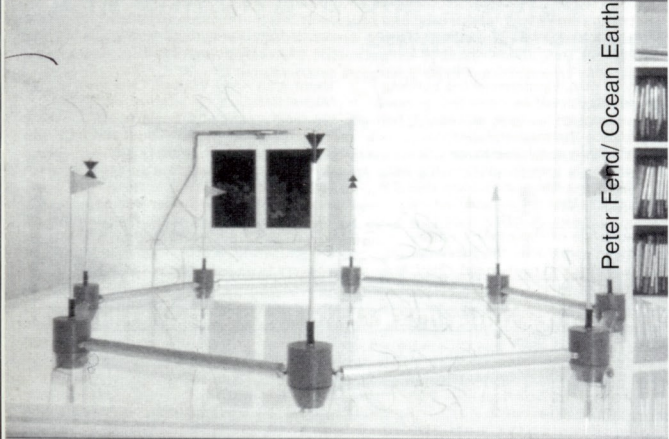
Well does it do that? No. So what do you do? You have to make that your job!

That means that you define a fuel base.

only wanted something that looked like it for the show. Hopefully with the funding we get we will have something that can hang from the roof without breaking down by its own weight.

On the other hand, I am very unhappy about too accurate plans in public. Then you always run the risk of getting imitated. We already had the unhappy experience of someone getting a great deal of information from the company and then going out and making it for himself.

ATTENTABLE STRUCTURES FROM ART OUT INTO ARCHITECTURE



Peter Fend/ Ocean Earth

SB: Why is the company interested in taking part in exhibitions?

PF: Well it is stupid and self-destructive to give out all your know how. You are going to commit suicide. But for the moment we are having a pretty tricky existential situation for the company. I think that the ocean energy system will work. I think it technically is a pretty easy undertaking. We have site in New Zealand where we are allowed to set Bismarck in the water. Okay, the company does not really have so

much money but in making shows such as this one here, the one in Genoa and the one in Japan we get some funding which we can use to develop the project. All the time I run the risk of exposing to much, which will damage the company. We would prefer having buyers of our product rather than making this show.

SB: How do you go about presenting the production of methane-gas as art?

PF: You can be sure that the founding structure of the Guggenheim museum or any other official institution simply will not allow it to happen. Not because they really hate it but because it is not their business. They are just making sure that they have a nice show ... I have that exact experience now in Japan.

Where they want me to make a show ... they don't want the real rig - Bismarck - they want something that looks like a real rig.

If you have had certain ideas ... well either the ideas are legitimate or not. If they are legitimate, what do you do? Beuys called himself chief of the hunters - either he is being ridiculous or he is being sensible - what could that possible mean? Well it so happens, and even more today than in the seventies when he proclaimed himself chief, that there is an emerging sci-

entific belief that in many parts of the world you can't go on farming. You have to go back to hunting, fishing, gathering. Take for example Nevada, the Pampas and parts of Brazil. Farming will simply destroy the land.

A chief of the hunters figure is therefore culturally necessary. Joseph Beuys imagination of a certain role happens to coincide with scientific understanding.

In seventy-six he had this other idea that everything had to go through 'fats corner'. What does that mean? That is technically a form of hydrocarbon. It's most fundamental form is methane gas ... basta.

Having identified that you have to figure out how all waste treatment can go into that form, and all your other energy supply will go through that form. And thereby make it non-polluting as well as renewable.

His Coyote piece is about cohabitating with nature so to speak ... how to cohabit with wild animals and nature. He has been an important originator in this field, important artist, important thinker.

SB: Duchamp took bottle driers into the art world. Can you relate Bismarck to that?

PF: Okay, you might say that some of our work has some artistic qualities and if an art dealer wants to sell the work, fine. But the fact is that the work is in fact engineering and architecture. It is not art. We are not making a painting of a rig. We are working to make the real thing.

The reason we still are working in the art context is that what we are doing is almost impossible to finance in the real world. Also, to place thousands of rigs at sea is illegal today.



Pipilotti Rist

What you can do in the art world is an imitation of an action. We are imitating the action of becoming a mature industrial corporation. We can't, there is nobody paying for it. However, the action would, if put into practice, work. This imitation will create a certain actuality.

Still being imitation of action, we are doing non-fictional art. We present true or feasible or possible things that can or will work. And we do that because we think art ideas as being applicable in the real world. We are not trying to fool anybody. We believe that the ocean-based energy system will work. We only need the political environment to place it in. It would work if you took this art idea seriously.

We can take it as far as to get this piece for 83 000 Danish crowns built and put it into the water.

That means you have to think about what kind of fuel goes into the city. Well, if the fuel is phosphor fuel, that means that it is screwing the city up. That means that you have to change it.

Water drains nutrients from land. The sea is the pit where it is collected. So you think, well, you can collect the nutrients and make bio-methane. You are better off doing this in the water than on land. Gravity is constantly carrying nutrients to the sea.

It is simple Smithsonian logic to solve a very simple Joseph Beuys question: how do you make methane-gas.

SB: How will the rigs be constructed?

PF: The basic structure is going to be made of aluminium ... open in the shape of a cone. It will be equipped with buoys and tanks, so you can sink it to a deeper level in the water if necessary. Basically the mechanism of a submarine. Or the technique you use when you do ship repairs. Water will be pumped in or out. The rigs will be anchored at the bottom of the sea.

If a ship for some reason has to get through an area with a large quantity of these rigs they can rapidly be sunk to a level of thirty meter below water level. The basic problem with offshore constructions has been that they tend to break in storms. This won't be a problem for Bismarck. You can simply give it the command to sink, and then bring it up after the storm. The rig will allow both top and bottom harvesting, assisted by the submarine Yamato.

We are making a show in august in Japan where we were going to make a fairly exact prototype of the rig. It turned out that they were not interested in that, they