

LULLALOOM / VÆVELUL

The logical structure of openness

Lullaloom is an experiment in openness: a dialogue emerging from very different standpoints and expressed in two vastly different media. The songs of Hanne Raffnsøe and the weavings of Lise Frølund search, here, for ways to communicate. The driving force of the project is curiosity regarding what is untested and a desire to explore possibilities far from the basis of one's own media.

In *Truth and Method* the philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer notes that openness has the “structure of a question:” “[d]iscourse that is intended to reveal something requires that that thing be opened up by the question.” The art of asking questions is therefore the “art of thinking” – a dialectic form of exploration which can transform the person asking as well as the person answering the question. Understanding, Gadamer writes, is always “more than the mere recreation of someone else's meaning.” Asking a question opens up possibilities of meaning and thus “what is meaningful passes into one's own thinking on the subject.”

Let the weaves sing and the song take physical form.

The starting point for *Lullaloom* was also a question, or rather a series of questions, meant to start the process of thinking and development. “Can we give body to the song?” asked the singer. “Can we make the loom sing?” asked the weaver. And together they asked: “can we create a creatively interesting product which is also intelligible for others? Can the loom and the song be translated into each others' languages?”

Each artist started with a ‘statement’ to the other. Hanne Raffnsøe composed a lullaby and Lise Frølund wove a tapestry on a single thread controller.

The loom as the mother of all computers

When Joseph Marie Jacquard invented the jacquard loom in 1801 he created a system of binary punch cards which also underlies our modern digital media. This binary system is the common denominator for Hanne Raffnsøe and Lise Frølund's experiment. The digital recording of music and the development of the single thread controller make the tapestries playable and the songs weavable when IT engineer Anna Buskgaard's program has adjusted the formats.



Lise Frølund's interest in the phenomenon of decoding, translation and identity began to take form in San Francisco airport. In the departure lounge her passport data, a new photograph and two index finger prints were all amalgamated into a black and white binary code. It was secret writing which required translation. What, she wondered, did it also say? How much of the traveller's identity did it contain? Could it be decoded and expressed in other media?

Horizon of expectation

As Gadamer argues, each question and every dialogue has a horizon of expectation. For Hanne Raffnsøe and Lise Frølund, it was the desire to create a process of translation through which the changeability of song – changes of tone, for example – would be visualised in the weavings. Equally, too, the various structures and visual expressions would register as noticeably different music.

In this, they did not succeed. Instead, *Lullaloom*'s dialogue takes place at the level of structure. The melody produced by the twill weave can be read by computer or music box but not the human eye. The tapestry's complex weaves are playable as sound which, when played slowly, turns into music. And likewise, Hanne Raffnsøe's lullaby can be played from the weaving structures of 33 baby rugs put together, not from the humanly readable signs such as colour, motive, etc

The communal process has therefore created a point of departure for further experimentation. The artists concluded that loom and the song *do* have a common language – a binary code which can be rendered graphically as black squares on white paper. If such a code is read by Lise Frølund and Hanne Raffnsøe's respective media – a loom and a music player – it becomes a piece of textile or a sequence of sound. What might another media produce from the same code? Or if the code is distorted? Or the ink runs? There are many possible paths to follow in experiments to come.

The openness which started this process therefore continues to be its defining principle. For as Gadamer contends, an authentic dialogue is one which fundamentally changes each participant:

“To reach an understanding with one's partner in a dialogue is not merely a matter of total self-expression and the successful assertion of one's own point of view, but a transformation into a communion, in which we do not remain who we were.”



