

LIFE-BOATS

- A sailing sculptural installation in ferrocement, with direct social participation, artistic exchange and incorporated music, by composer Geir Johnson

Marit Benthe Norheim (Norway)

Abstract

Three sculptures in concrete will become functioning boats, shaped as female figures. (12m. in length, 3m above water surface). - Propelled by el-motors, charged by alternative energy.

Life-boats will sail, with captains and passengers, on the European canals, leading them through the heart of the European cities. The sailing sculptures will connect the countries together through a cultural exchange - which has always been a part of the history of Europe.

The project is about meetings– about receiving foreign expressions – about daring to move into unknown territory and communicate on the basis of common grounds. There will be direct participation and involvement in the process, both in the production phase and on the journey. The audience in the towns that the boats will be docking will be able to go on board and experience the installations within the sculptures which also will contain music by the Norwegian composer Geir Johnson.

Keywords: - Flexibility, mobility, archetypal protection symbols, women in different stages and conditions of life, direct involvement of a variety of population groups, incorporation of music.

Introduction

- Creating Spaces for Social Participation.

LIFE-BOATS and related projects.

In my art I am addressing topics that I am very pleased to be able to exchange within the framework of this conference and it's subject matters.

As a child I lived in India, and when I started school in Norway as a 7-year old, I was convinced that I was half Indian. I had so many stories to tell, and my experiences from such a different world to the Norwegian, made me into a storyteller from an early age.

I can see now; that the ways in which the Asian societies relate so strongly to the public spaces – where they meet, eat and share experiences of human and religious matters, often on grand scale - has had a great influence upon my way of expressing myself artistically.

I have been looking forward to give a talk and to show my work, in a part of the world where the power and magic of objects is a part of people's lives in a different way than in the Nordic countries

I believe that I don't need to explain the need for the irrational – for what happens between the lines, in the same way – or is that just my nostalgic memories from another world?

As a woman I have naturally been involved in working with the feminine aspects in my sculptures.

I am often working on a large scale, but that is not because I want to make big monuments, it is because I work site-specific, and therefore relate to the proportions of the surroundings that I am dealing with. And I am opposing the power-monuments, which very often are masculine power demonstrations in the public space.

For the last 12 years I have made several mobile sculptures. - Figures that represent symbols of for instance protection and bear in them easy identifiable states/conditions and emotions. They are made in concrete and are still able to move - durable in the choice of material, but they appear and disappear again. They will drive or maybe sail past you – past people who are not prepared for that kind of experience.

I am interested in art which is placed into, or is a part of a context, and which can be experienced on many levels, not just through the intellect and thoughts. This is why working in the public space has interested me so much. Producing a story - my own selected parts set in relation to the site specific - has been the driving force of large parts of my production.

Social participation is a very important part of my concept structure, both through direct involvements, where amongst others collected photos or personal symbols modeled in porcelain (according to a given theme) are incorporated into the projects. But also the physical aspect of being able to experience the sculptures by sitting on them, turn and drive them, slide through them or enter into them. It is important for me when I involve children and young people in my projects that they should not just "do" but that they are made aware of the creative process - of thinking for themselves - of finding their own expression and sticking with it. This is why the schools have worked in parallel with me on a variety of related themes - also in many different subjects.

Introduction of a selection of sculptural projects that have direct relevance for the "Life-boats" project.

What they have in common is that they relate to some of the aspects that the three sculptural ships are built upon:

- Use of archetypal protection symbols
- Women in different stages and conditions of life
- Direct involvement of a variety of population groups
- Climate, waste/recycling, environment
- Flexibility, mobility - Incorporation of music in collaboration with the composer Geir Johnson

Figure 1: Rolling Angels and the Norwegian Soloist's Choir; singing Geir Johnsons composition "Rolling Angels" in the Church of St. Martin in The Fields, Trafalgar Square, London, 2000. Photo by C. Ørntoft

"Rolling Angels" (– 16 human sized angels in concrete, modeled over used dustbin armatures.)

The dustbins were given wheels so that they could move. Composer Geir Johnson produced sounds that buzzed out of speakers molded into each angel, based on insects and birds, so that they could create their own sound world.

Rolling Angels have been pushed through the centre of Oslo, into Jakob Culture Church, after which they rolled through Wick in Northern Scotland, and then on to London, (Trafalgar square, the Church of St. Martin in the Fields and Salisbury Cathedral) afterwards Sæby and Århus Cathedral, Denmark. Over the course of the whole journey the Norwegian Soloists choir performed the composition "Rolling Angels" by Geir Johnson, written for the sculptures.

Angels are, just like the figureheads, populist symbols, used by all cultures and religions, which everyone can relate to. It has been exciting and enlightening to make a work that is as adaptable as this one, where audience participation and involvement have been crucial for being able to use them in the public space. They have been pulled and pushed through the towns by both young and old. These journeys have also demonstrated the relationship that three different cultures have to angels as symbols, and the reactions to the angel sculptures' effect on the public life. In Norway, most

of the focus was placed on the sculptures as a missionary tool and the prejudices surrounding this. Both in the UK and in Denmark the curiosity was directed to a greater degree towards the connection between the spiritual aspect and culture, both in terms of content and historically. The angels staged confrontational and challenging situations by their mere presence. The character of the surroundings was changed by the arrival of this large flock of angels.

Figure 2: Rolling angels pushed by an old man over Trafalgar Square, London 2000. Photo by C. Ørntoft

Another populist protection symbol, that I always have been fascinated by, as one of the few "ritualistic" images in the western culture, outside of the churches, is the figurehead which I have used at several occasions in different ways. -

Figure 3: Figureheads - Women in the Wind for a biological cleansing plant, Skien, Norway 1996. Photo by Tom Riis.

“Figureheads – Women in the wind” (- Five figures in concrete on two purification towers, each 6 meters tall. For the pulp and paper company Union/Norske Skog, Skien 1996.) The company wanted to create a positive focus for their new biological purification tanks. This extension became the company’s “flagship”, I chose to make a fertility cycle consisting of female figureheads as an architectonic component of the two industrial purification tanks. Just as the well-known symbol of the figurehead has protected humankind on its voyages on unknown waters, so the concrete women protect the biological, womb-like purification tanks. Each of the sculptures has its history associated with the process, as well as being intended as spiritual “pin-ups” with content, in a very male-dominated factory environment, where the area around the tanks was in use around the clock. In addition to the employees being very enthusiastic about their women the company also got its own page on the Ministry of the Environment’s website for both visually and environmentally improving the environment in Skien.

For me, it was fantastic to experience the significance that these irrational figures were getting in such a rational functional context. Unfortunately, the factory is closed now. During the difficult process of closing the factory, several of the factory workers said: “They are not going to take our ladies!” They were also named one of the 7 wonders of Telemark in the Telemark newspaper! This is why they have allowed the purification tanks with the figureheads to remain and they are now finding a new use for the building.

I have chosen to bring extracts from the following article “Strong frontal figures” by art historian Jorunn Veiteberg in the book “Armed women – a story about the creation in concrete”, by Kjersti Bache, published on the process of this piece. - Because it highlights my interest in the tradition of the figureheads/ galleon figure from an art historic angle:

“The huge dimensions of the figures and the constant touching on sensuality and fertility, nourishment and protection, lead one’s thoughts to depictions of female deities in pre-Christian religions. These early mothers symbolized fertility and life-giving, and in primitive cultures where man lives in harmony with earth and nature’s cycles, fertility is always sacred. Norheims sculptures bear witness to faith in the body’s experience and women’s strength. And the most important aspect of Marit Benthe Norheim’s figureheads is their function as protective symbols and signposts.”

Figure 4: “Lady of the sea” at Saeby harbor, DK, in collaboration with 905 children. Photo by C. Ørntoft.

“The Lady of the sea” (Saeby harbor, Denmark, 2001, concrete, 6.85 meters tall,) has two faces, looking over the sea as well as looking in towards land.

The sculpture refers to the main character in the play “The Lady of the Sea” by Henrik Ibsen, which he wrote in Saeby. Here, the sea is referred to as a symbol of all the dark forces within and outside of ourselves, where the woman sees herself like a mermaid washed up on shore.

It also refers to the medieval image of Virgin Mary from the chalk paintings of Sæby church, where she bares her breast to Christ on doomsday and seems to say; “you have been human, you have suckled from me, please show mercy upon the poor people I am hiding in my cloak.”

But the main point of reference is again the figurehead. 905 children and young people in Sæby were asked to imagine a situation of danger and then make their own protection symbols in ceramics and glass. They produced everything from angels and devils to pizza and mobile phones, play stations and portraits of pets and parents. These reliefs are incorporated as a mosaic into the cape of the sculpture of the “Lady of the Sea.” This sculpture was the first to involve the collaboration with schools and children on a large scale. The project leader Inger Grund Petersen wrote about the process in this way:

“Marit Benthe Norheim has a singular ability to involve both children and adults in her huge projects. With great seriousness and commitment, she manages to both communicate her visions as well as being open and unbiased in her approach to the people that she includes in her work. She has, as an artist, a unique respect for the expressiveness that children contribute, and succeeds in creating enthusiasm, ownership – and above all else, meaning in the artworks that she creates.”

Else Marie Bukdahl D. Phil. writes about the piece that:

“The Lady of the Sea” - is an example of how a monumental sculpture can create a whole new town space; provide a location with an eye catching new profile and the town a striking landmark. With The Lady of the Sea, Marit Benthe Norheim has succeeded in combining writing and sculpture, religion and art, children and art, together in a way that is both fascinating and original.”

Figure 5: "The Rat Maiden" Skien, 2006, cement, 7 meters tall. - Made for the 100 year jubilee of Henrik Ibsen's death.

"The Rat Maiden" (Skien, 2006, cement, 7 meters tall. Made for the 100 year jubilee of Henrik Ibsen's death.)
"The Rat maiden" is a character in Henrik Ibsen's play "Little Eyolf". She is a rat catcher, who sees herself as the liberator of the rats and she goes from home to home to see if there is anything that nags or gnaws. In little Eyolf's family there are no rats, but the little 11 year old boy is trapped between two parents in a marriage filled with conflict. They overprotect and disregard Eyolf. The Rat Maiden sees who Eyolf actually is and gives him new opportunities, which Ibsen symbolizes by his drowning; surrounded by water, as a symbol of change, new life. Rats are some of the most despised species in our culture, and when the Rat Maiden takes their side, she becomes a symbol of a kind of protector of the ostracized.

I have also constructed a slide inside her, so that children can climb up on her back, move through her and slide through the rat and what it represents and come out in one piece on the other side. Inside her you can hear Geir Johnson's composition "The journey between laughter and tears."

Because the piece is so much about seeing and being seen or not seeing and not being seen, 2300 children and young people have made eyes in porcelain, which are inlaid as a mosaic within her body.

Figure 6: "Campingwomen" – a rolling installation in concrete, made for Stavanger 2008 European Capital of Culture. Photo Niels Fabaek.

"Campingwomen" - made in relation to the European Capital of Culture Stavanger 2008

The bearing idea and simultaneously the inner armature of the construction of the concrete sculptures are functioning caravans. Each of the female sculptures' torsos grows out of the roof, such that the caravan functions as the skirt of the figure. One can enter the 4 meters tall Campingwomen which are titled; the Refugee, the Bride, Maria the Protector, Sirene and Campingmama. Inside, the space has been customized in various ways - several of them with the participation of different population groups.

The caravans are capable of being towed; they arrive behind their respective cars and have rolled around during the European Cultural Capital of Stavanger 2008 region for 8 months on a constant journey. They have visited about 40 locations in that period, camping sites, parks, schools, town squares etc. The installation has since visited Reykjavik Arts Festival, Iceland, in addition to several journeys throughout Norway and Denmark. They are soon to be situated and used for the next years to come, by Aalborg University, Denmark.

Figure 7: LIFE-BOATS - Manipulated photo by C. Orntoft and Malene Pedersen, of the sailing sculptures in the Norwegian fjord of Larvik.

LIFE-BOATS - A SAILING SCULPTURAL INSTALLATION IN FERROCEMENT, WITH DIRECT SOCIAL PARTICIPATION, ARTISTIC EXCHANGE AND MUSIC BY GEIR JOHNSON

It started with a dream I had one night that I saw the Campingwomen sailing on the water. After that I researched the possibility of making boats out of concrete. Ferrocement boats have a long history going all the way back to 1848. The reason why it is not a technique that is used very often today is due to the fact that it is difficult to make the process effective. Building a boat in this technique is a handcraft, and is approximately the same process that I have used for many years to make my sculptures.

I am working towards creating three sculptures in concrete which will become functioning boats, shaped as female figures. They will be 12m in length and rise 3m over the surface of the water. The sailing figures will be propelled forward by electrical motors which will be charged with alternative energy.

The sculptures will become "floating cultural houses" and will sail on the European canals, which naturally lead the ships through the heart of the European cities that are built up around the old waterways. The project will not be related to the borders of the respective countries, but rather, will connect their cities together through a cultural exchange - which has always been a part of the history of Europe.

The Life-boats project is about meetings – about exchange – about receiving foreign expressions – about daring to move into unknown territory. In addition, I will, as with several of my previous projects be using direct participation and direct involvement in the process, both in the production phase and on the journey.

I have always been interested in the manner of which populist, recognizable symbols provide a portal into the irrational, and I have therefore several times worked with the symbol of the figurehead as a protection on many different levels. *(see the chapter about the figureheads/ladies in the wind) The figurehead in this instance is taking over the entire boat, instead of keeping watch from the bow. She will become the boat itself.

The water, the boat/ship - and the act of sailing, contain many symbols that relate to life and passion, rebirth and death, overcoming and communication on many levels. Each "Life -boats" character and its interior will relate to this.

Their subtitles are based on a Scandinavian word game, often played whilst travelling; "My ship is loaded with something beginning with..." – And then mentioning a letter. The sculptural group "Life - boats", will comprise three female boats, where the preliminary overriding theme will be woman in the three phases of life. Each sculpture has its own identity and narrative, based on biological components of the female reality that are the same for all women in all cultures. - Obvious, but nevertheless full of incomprehensible and irrational magic.

The individual titles are:

"My ship is loaded with Longing" the young one, entering the world, whilst offering her breast. She lies on her side, with her hips as the cabin. She will have a treasure chest inside her body. The treasure chest is decorated with true pearls and prisms, with a letter opening, so that the people we meet will have a chance to deliver letters with their dreams, hopes and longings for storage in this chest.

Figure 8: The full scale chest in the shopping center Friis, Aalborg. Photo MB Norheim..

As a part of the Danish Art festival, Port 2010, the chest, in full size, which will be inside the first "Life-boats" sculpture, was exhibited at the active shopping centre. Below is the letter, with the invitation to take part in the project.

"Dear children, young people and adults of all ages.

I am writing to invite your innermost longings on a journey. The chest you see before you will be placed inside a female sculpture called "My ship is loaded with Longing", part of the "Life-boats" project. She will be the first one that is made, of the three (12 meters long) sculptural ships in concrete that will be launched in North Jutland and will sail on the European canals. The idea is to involve as broad an audience as possible throughout Europe.

In the chest you can place love letters, poems etc. which you have lying around, which you perhaps don't dare to send or to show to anyone, but which you nevertheless do not want to throw away. Texts about dreams and longings can also be written on site, placed in the chest and mixed with everyone else's hopes and longings. The chest will sail out into the unknown; it is sealed and will never be opened.

- What can easily be shown and what is so intimate that you want to keep it to yourself? By placing the texts into the chest, one doesn't need to explain anything to anyone, or to reveal oneself. What are the boundaries of modesty for the written word in our era of mobile and internet communication?

Children and young people do not write letters any more. All communication takes place quickly. One doesn't wait longingly for a reply for days – weeks – months. Generation 30+ wrote love letters and handwritten poems, which were kept in a secret place, if one didn't dare to send them by post. If they did get sent and an answer was received, then these were read many times and hidden well. Many people have looked after these kinds of valuable personal letters their entire lives.

I work physically with my art. The digital for me is a tool for necessary, practical communication, but not for the most intimate thoughts. Does handwritten become more private than what is written or stored on the computer? Is the personal computer or mobile today's private/secret treasure chest?

Hope you will sail with us - both in spirit and in words. Best regards from Benthe"

" My ship is loaded with Life", in the middle of her life and pregnant. She floats on her back - with her pregnant belly as the cabin.

Children and young people from every country that we sail to, will be asked to model a self portrait in ceramics. I want to have the greatest possible diversity of nations and cultures represented.

We will collect the reliefs, when we arrive in the various docks and fix them into place in the boat. Together they will create a wall to wall mosaic inside of her.

The photo shows the inside of the model on a scale of 1:5, where children have created self portraits on a scale of 1:5 as a test of the resulting mosaic.

" My ship is loaded with Memories" the ageing or death.

She travels on her belly, full of small figureheads on her back, so that they can maintain watch in all directions. This ship will be built out of many composite notions of women, based on a variety of portraits of women from the participating countries. The women will be over 70 and will have a history which means that they will have travelled and lived in countries other than their own – and for different reasons. We will include interviews with refugee women and immigrant women from as many different cultures as possible – living in the participating countries. The interviews will be about belonging and identification and will be made available to the public audio visually inside the sculpture.

Figure 9: All three models 1:5 from an exhibition in Skagen, Denmark. Photo MB Norheim.

A travelling exhibition with a presentation of the "Life-boats" process, started in November 2009 and is still on the move. This exhibition is expanded as the project progresses. In addition there have been seminars arranged with the Life-boats project as a turning point. Below is the introduction text to a seminar at Utzon Center, Aalborg, DK. 2010, by Professor Antje Gimmler:

"OF ROUTES AND ROOTS - A dialogue between mobility research and art"

Mobility is one of the central characteristics of our globalised era. We are virtually mobile - with new communications media. We move geographically when we travel and commute or move. We use products that have been transported all over the world. But we also travel mentally; we develop as individuals and create a new narrative about our identity as we relate to our future and past. When we move down routes, we also create roots to the places, the people and the symbols that are meaningful for our identity and existence. Routes and roots are attached to each other and new and unexpected connections come into being in the world of mobility.

The artist Marit Benthe Norheim has, with her project "Life-boats", created a unique access to the journey as a symbol of the human longing for both continuity and change. In the project, the boats invite a sensual experience of the different sides of our inner and outer realities in the daily life of mobility".

The journeys: can be undertaken over the course of many years during the summer seasons. The process of planning and organizing the trips and the artistic exchange – which is a large part of the aim of the "Life-Boats" project, will run alongside the production phase. During the course of the production phase an international coordinator will be appointed, to take care of the contacts with the different cultural institutions in the various cities, and to enter into collaborations.

The cities that the sailing sculptures will be docking at, will be chosen in collaboration with a network which is in the process of being built up. It is an important part of the overall concept of the project that "Life-Boats" become an open narrative framework and that it establishes an artistic exchange, where representatives of each country meet the sailing sculptures and the artists that are travelling with them, with their own performance artists, musicians, singers, etc. The sculptures will function as **mobile cultural institutions**.

Holger Koefoed, Art Historian writer and lecturer of the Oslo National Academy of Arts, expressed his views on the journeys of the Life-boats in this way:

"I think of the dragon ship of the Vikings, which struck fear into the hearts of people along the coasts and canals of Europe. Now, a different and more modest fleet of women are coming, with an entirely different message - take care of the environment, travel sustainably, imagination is our greatest resource, etc. There are so many dimensions to this art project that are important and positive on their own - and which, collectively approach fairytale proportions! Nordic wanderlust has led to other ways of experiencing than by hoarding and this art project can become an image of the Nordic contribution to our common European culture which could create society and culture according to the Nordic model - politically, socially and artistically. This project is not ideology in solid form, but will function in a more open and inspirational way. There are alternatives, even in this day and age, which is so desperately in need of them."

Another comment to the idea of the sailing sculptures' journeys comes from Inger Grund Petersen:

"Norheim's sculptural projects are always communicative cultural projects in the broadest sense, and nobody who comes into contact with Marit Benthe Norheim's new project "Life-boats" will remain untouched by the meeting, just as "Life-boats" will become infused with meaning from all the people, who go on board the "Life-boats" on the journey through Europe, and contribute to the artwork. At a time of huge divisions in the European project, it is precisely this cross-border cultural exchange and powerful artistic projects like "Life-boats" that are capable of creating cohesion and cultural understanding"

Else Marie Bukdahl is also commenting on the art exchanging voyages in this way:

"In a world where there are often contradictions between population groups and nationalities, the "Life Boats" will create new life-affirming relations between people and symbolize the desire for fellowship and respect for one another, which is always at the top of our agenda, but which we often have had problems with realizing"

The music for the "Life-boats":

In several of my projects, both the temporary and the permanent ones, I have had a good collaboration with the Norwegian composer, Geir Johnson. He will also create music for the interior of the "Life-boats" such that the female boats are all profiled by his sounds capes, which contain musical interpretations of the various sailing women's characters and lives. I have chosen to cite Geir Johnson's words about the musical aspects of our collaboration:

"During the last fifteen years I have worked out a lot of music to Marit Benthe Norheim's sculptures. Some have been implemented for the unveiling and inauguration. Others have been mounted inside her sculptures - and some have been pure sound installations - music to accompany the sculptures. When she asked me to compose music for Life-Boats, it was soon clear to me that I would need to consider at least two different tasks. One would be to create music that follows the sculptural boats on the journey, and which is mounted inside the boats, while the other will be the music used when the Life-boats come to their port calls elsewhere. This time I decided to take on the first task, to create music that is in the boats, and which will face the public when they enter the boat, or which may accompany the crew on trips. In this music I'm interested in mythical conditions, such as the Sirens' song of Odysseus: What was it really he heard, that was so beautiful that he had to bind himself to the mast? But music which is based on man's relationship with the sea has many other points of departure. One can also ask the question about the world of sounds that have followed the sailors at all times when they crossed the oceans, home from the trade mission or from looting, with spices and fine fabrics, or with slaves and booty..And in all this, the seafarers' own music, which often expressed longing for another life, and the songs of those who sat at home, and as expected, perhaps in vain for one who never came back. As a textual basis, I work for example with texts by Enheduanna, the world's oldest-known poet, who was the princess and priestess in the city of UR in Mesopotamia about 4,000 years ago.

This is the starting point for the music that will fill the three Life-boats, where hardly anything is going to be recognizable, but where the elements of this will be to rediscover in the creative process."

I also want to present a new project which will be part of the journeys, rising from Life-boats, by Ruth Wilhelmine Meyer, Singer / Vocal performer, in her own words:

“Life-boats become Life-sounds. - It radiates so powerfully from the boats of Marit Benthe Norheim that they must get answers from living women on land. The boat sculptures must be transformed into social sound sculptures: Life-sounds. The boats - “Longing”, “Life”, and “Memories” should meet children, pregnant women and women over 70 when they dock. We must hear the sound of this meeting; children’s voices of the most peculiar varieties, elderly people humming an old song from their shared musical heritage and very importantly, the sound of unborn life: Many pregnant women gathered with contact microphones on their bellies so that we can all hear it together. That is how we become bound together in a communal sound sculpture. This is universal, indivisibly connected to the life cycle and life experiences. - Powerful and inviolable. More specifically, I can see how this sound composition, which is directly inspired and connected to Life-boats, could form a kind of core in the diverse cultural exchange that will take place when the boats arrive at various locations. This core is so powerful that it can enter into an artistic unity with other expressions of both visual as well as performance art. This is how Norheim starts a wave of new visions in the world with her highly visionary, but very concrete sculptures.”

The Norwegian singer Jørn Simen Øverli, who will also be a passenger performing on the journeys, are saying about the importance of cultural exchange through songs:

“Life-boats” can encompass an enormous amount whilst it is in the process of being realized. Communication is the key word. In my view, it would be natural to attach songs to the boats. The boats will cross borders and create contacts and it is thus important and natural that they will be filled with many different kinds of artistic expression. Songs are one of the best shortcuts to creating an understanding of each others’ cultures, which is what the boats meant to do.”

Figure 10: Production process in full scale of “My ship is loaded with Life” Photo MB Norheim.

Production in full scale: As I am writing, the first sculptural ship is fully financed and half of the financing for the second ship is in place. The first ship is therefore finished and the next half way done. Funding is being applied for on an ongoing basis for the implementation of the whole project. The whole project will only be launched when all three sculptures are fully financed and finished together.

The technical and artistic process takes place in my workshop in Mygdal, near Hjørring, North Jutland, Denmark. The workshop has undergone a comprehensive refit in order to be able to function as a “shipyard.” I have two assistants in the workshop, who take part in the welding and building of the sculptural ships. The ship-engineer L.T. Olsen from CDE Danish Marine Design ApS has produced drawings to full scale for the sculptural ships. And the boat builder Erik Foldager who has built several ferrocement boats, is part of the process both practically and as a consultant.

There are a great number of collaborative partners from several countries to this project. Cultural institutions and educational institutions are for instance collaborative partners for the collection and dissemination of knowledge and experience of the artistic and ship technical process regarding the journeys and the exchanges both artistically and culturally.

A weekend in May 2012, more that 80 voluntaries participated in the casting of the first boat. This was a very powerful event of working together to achieve a clear and specific task, by people from the age of 15 – 75, and from a huge variety of social backgrounds.

Figure 11: The casting process of “My ship is loaded with Longing” Photo Niels Fabaek.

Conclusion

The overriding theme is communication. The overall aim of the ”Life-boats” project is to create new kinds of dissemination of art and culture. That is why there will be established exchanges on many different levels. Women use their bodies to develop, protect and nourish life, both physically and intellectually, until it is viable. These are values that I, as a woman, want to keep elevated and visible in our times, where fellowship needs to be emphasized. By doing this I want to demonstrate, what we can achieve together, and that we are dependent on both giving and receiving care and protection. The figurehead as a protection against unknown dangers will be a reminder and an admission that we need the irrational and spiritual aspect in our meeting with the world. - A reality where all the unknowns have come closer through our communication possibilities, both digitally and physically.

The outcome that I am hoping for, with the Life-boats project, is that people will see that irrational and - at the outset - mad visions can be realized. That belief can move mountains. That one can embark on unknown journeys in and outside of oneself and create a foundation of value in the service of culture, which creates opportunities for lifting and carrying together.

Figure 12: “My ship is loaded with Longing” The first sculptural ship is ready and stored outside of my studio, until it will be sailing together with the other two sculptural ships. Photo: MB Norheim

Information about the ongoing process can be found on this web-site: www.life-boats.com

Photographic credits:

The photos are kindly provided by

Claus Orntoft: Figure 1, 2, 4, 7 with Malene Pedersen,

Tom Riis: Figure 3

MB Norheim: Figure 5, 8, 9, 10, 12

Niels Fabæk: Figure 6, 11

Endnotes

All the quotes are cited from the substantial concept description of Life-boats. Available on the web-site www.norheim.dk and www.life-boats.com