The Legacy of Max Ros
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1. An introduction

In this essay

By writing this essay I hope to get a better understanding of the different parts of my project. How to tell the story in a series format through multiple media and channels. How to relate a public environmental debate to a fictional story. Realism and Fantasy; how realistic can fiction become and how fictional can reality be?

The environmental message

Almost everyone has heard the environmental message. It is widely spread and lots of new voices are being raised every day.¹

I do not believe there is a lack of promotional propaganda. I do however believe the more varied the voices the better. I want to dramatize the environmental crisis without moralizing. My aim is not to preach but to portray cause and effect through a symbolic fiction, a method I hope will reach people on a different and emotional level.

Hayao Mizakis film *Princess Mononoke*, 1997, (Original title: Mononoke-him) successfully achieves that goal. In the film we meet Ashitaka who finds himself on both sides of a war between a mining colony and the Gods of the Forest. To put it simple, he sees the good on both sides and tries to promote harmony.²

There is a continuous flow of new feature film addressing the environmental issues.³

¹ See for example...


Books:

Documentaries:
Davis Guggenheim, *An Inconvenient Truth*, 2006, USA.
Leonardo DiCaprio, *The 11th Hour* [film], 2007, USA.
Franny Armstrong, *The Age of Stupid*, 2009, GB.
Gene Rosow and Bill Benenson, *Dirt!,* 2009, USA.


³ Steven Soderbergh, *Erin Brockovich*, 2000, USA.
Roland Emmerich, *The Day After Tomorrow*, 2004, USA.
Andrew Stanton, Pixar Animation Studios, *WALL-E*, 2008, USA.
Kudos Film and Television, Burn Up Productions, Seven24 Films, *Burn up*, (mini-series), 2008, UK & Canada.
Roland Emmerich, *2012*, 2009, USA.
James Cameron, *Avatar*, 2009, USA.
Open narrative structures

Barbara Hardy once wrote:

*I take for granted the ways in which storytelling engages our interest, curiosity, fear, tensions, expectation, and sense of order. What concern me here are the qualities which fictional narrative shares with that inner and outer storytelling that plays a major role in our sleeping and waking lives. For we dream in narrative, daydream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, believe, doubt, plan, revise, criticize, construct, gossip, learn, hate, and love by narrative. In order really to live, we make up stories about ourselves and others, about the personal as well as the social past and future.*

I believe this quote summarises the incredible potential of storytelling.

In order to understand something, for example a given situation or a person's specific condition, (something=x) the background story is essential. Knowing the story leading up to “x” gives us the potential to place ourselves in that story. When we picture ourselves in the story we can start to relate to “x”, consequently giving us a better possibility to understand what “x” is.

My art project is a fictional story, composed by me, containing an environmental message and told through a variety of media. The story has a beginning, a middle but no end. Like the format of TV series or comic books, shorter stories are told in order to lead to a bigger story. The apocalyptic nature of my story suggests that the end is near but how near is left open. This way of narration is necessary since I want to investigate how current events can affect the future of my story. My anticipation is that the open narrative structure allows me to comment on what is going on in the environmental debate today.

What is different when telling a story in an art context contra that of, for example, literature, games or museums? I believe the context of art is very allowing in its form. Art gives me the opportunity to borrow elements from all kinds of contexts where storytelling plays a major role. As every media has its own unique qualities I can chose those I think best suited to mediate a specific part of the story. Any experience the art consumer has when “viewing” Fine Arts is analysed as a possible action of intent from the “Artist”.

In a museum stories are told through artefacts such as, historical documents, paintings, trinkets and tools. The stories behind historical objects might be presented by a guide or a wall text. The objects without the story might be quite uninteresting. But when the stories behind the objects are told and you picture them in a historical event or even with a specific historical person the objects become a visual memories for the stories told and give the stories a physical presence. The stories give the objects life and the objects make the stories believable and imaginable.

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A short synopsis of the story

The story is based around a character created by me, Max Ros (former Albert Maximus Karlsson, born 1938, Brokind, Östergötland, Sweden). The story starts in 1958 when Max leaves his work at SAAB in Linköping early one Friday afternoon to pick mushrooms in a forest near his home in Brokind, (a small community outside of Linköping, Sweden). During his walk in the forest he encounters a mystic phenomena as he stumbles up-on a sentinel plant. The plant introduces him to Arbor Vitae (The Tree of Life).

Arbor Vitae is responsible for the ecological balance on earth and has since the industrial revolution kept a watchful eye on us humans. The ecological balance is about to collapse due to human activity. In order to prevent this Arbor Vitae needs to take action before the planet is lost for ever. Arbor Vitae decides to appoint a human messenger to heave warnings upon mankind. In order to successfully communicate with Max Ros it gives him the ability to communicate with sentinel plants. The plants are sent out by Arbor Vitae from the Inner Forest where it resides.

During Max Ros’ first encounters with these sentinel plants he does not fully grasp the task that is given to him. However, in time he starts to comprehend the grave importance of these messages. I came in contact with Max Ros by coincidence 2010 whereupon we started a collaboration. Max Ros told me that “I sincerely believe you are the person to help me spread this message in such a way that people will listen, grasp and eventually change their unknowledgeable ways, without necessarily having to believe my experiences.” Max Ros is still “alive” and his history is still being written.

After Max Ros spent time at the hospital in 1958 he was diagnosed unfit for work and was sick-listed and was later given an early retirement due to ill health. From 1958 till today he has been trying to do what Arbor Vitae and the earth need him to do.

Parts of Max Ros’ past and present life is publicly told when he tells me the world is ready to hear it and deems it safe to tell.

For instance I recently made public that Max Ros did have a number of dreams prior to and during the Chernobyl catastrophe, the 26 April 1986 01:23:45 am. The dreams revealed what was about to happen before it happened. Max Ros was unfortunately unable to understand the dreams in time. Max Ros was however able to follow a message received in his dream to Gävle where he met the plants Venum Bibentis that sacrificed their lives in order to neutralise radioactive radiation.

Now during the event of the degree exhibition at Konstfack I have been given permission and encouragement to reveal some of his work done during 1970 and 1990.
2. Background

The Forest

I grew up near a forest where I used to play, building small huts out of materials that the forest provided. The forest became a place for fantasy and imagination, a place where I made the rules. The forest had all the ingredients I wanted. It was mystic, thrilling and secretive; a place where anything was possible.

Natural Materials

I lived in New York for two years (while completing my BFA). In the city nature was not present and since I missed it I started experimenting with natural materials in Sculptures and Paintings.

I tried out different methods and techniques in order to use them as paint or texture in my work and still keep their natural tactility intact. I wanted the paintings and sculptures to feel natural.

Installations and Sculpture

I moved to Linköping, Sweden in 2000. Now being close to nature again I started doing a lot of installations and sculptures using materials taken from nature. Eventually I started making installations directly in nature that would appear to belong in the natural environment, as if they were plants in their natural habitat. My intention was not to make them appear as plants but some of them just did. With the help of these installations I got more and more interested in trying to capture the mystic and natural poetics that the forest embodies. The idea of the sentinel plants in my story about Max Ros originate from these installations. Some of my bigger inspirations during this time were artists such as Andy Goldsworthy and Donald Lipsky.

Performance and narrative

In 2004 I formed the performance group BUUT with two friends (Jacob Lind and Marcus Flood) where we worked with a narration based on characters (we called them beings) that we portrayed through performances. Each performance (or as we called them, buut phenomena) was later studied in detail by our research group RGB. In Ann-Sofi Sidén's movie I Think I Call Her QM, Sidén uses a similar method.\(^5\)

\(^5\) Ann-Sofi Sidén and Tony Gerber, QM, I Think I Call Her QM, 1997, USA
A.S. Sidéns character QM, portrayed by A.S. Sidén herself, naked and covered in mud from head to toe. QMs first public appearance was when she entered Nordiska Galleriet (NK) in Stockholm 1989 where she went in and tried out a few perfumes before being asked if she had permission by a security guard. She left the department store shortly after. A few years later she made the movie QM, I Think I Call Her QM where she portrayed the main protagonist a paranoid Dr. Fielding (played by Kathleen Chalfant) based on the real psychiatrist Alice E. Fabian. Dr. Filding finds QM (played by Ann-Sofi Sidén) hiding under her bed one morning and decides to analyse QM through observation and experimentation.6

In a sense this is a similar method to what we did with BUUT. The characters in a performance later became a character in a narrative.

The working structure we set up in BUUT has inspired me to work with narrative in this project but with a more solid constructed story and less focus on the performative.

3. Public presentations of the Legacy of Max Ros

Different media

When presenting the story publicly, I do it in different media. I have so far used drawing, illustration, installation, sculpture, photography, written story and spoken story.

When I draw or illustrate part of the story I want the images to have that mystic fantasy aesthetic of a dreamlike timelessness (fig 1-3). The illustrations are a traditional and familiar way of telling myths and legends.

When I make installations it draws upon what is real. The physical presence of an installation makes it a physical experience and something that gives the story a presence in the now. I explain in greater detail my take on the use of installation through other artists later in this essay.

The Sculptures have a similar effect to the Installation. So far when I have used sculpture in this project it has been to leave a “permanent” trace of the story out in the “real world”. The trace being a monument or reflection of the story rather than being the story.

Photography is also something that draws upon the “real” (fig 4-5). The photograph is a recording of reality. Like a time document of a specific instant in history. Very useful if you need to convince something that was not “was”.

The written story is something best consumed when given time to read or the person reading is sure to be comfortable enough to take the time to read. For example I personally think that a

gallery space or a museum seldom is the right place to read a longer text. A text is best consumed when not stressed. When it comes to storytelling text can be a very strong tool, but I think you have to be careful to not overuse it.

The told story is similar to the read story only that the listener is not as active. What is beneficial with the told story is that you can listen, walk, feel and look at the same time. In the context of looking at an exhibition or an installation it is often more convenient to listen than to read, not least because it is more time efficient.

“Permanens III”, Linköpings University, KIWI, 2011, Linköping

(fig.6-8)When given a budget to make a permanent sculpture for Linköpings University, I took the opportunity to make a sculpture of Arbor Vitae; a vital character in the story about Max Ros. The budget was big enough for a small tree sculpture, but not big enough to make a life size Arbor Vitae with glowing leafs floating in mid-air around a stem in an energetic energy field. In context to the story it was attractive to make an ancient trace of Arbor Vitae. A “real trace” that “proves” the trees existence and that it used to grow in the “real world”. The sculpture is presented as a petrified tree with an historic sign explaining the trees history.

...at the turn of the century 1800 Arbor Vitae used to grow in Linköping now and then. The tree has never returned after the industrial revolution. However a petrified Arbor Vitae remains. Like the snake that leaves its former skin behind, the tree has moved on but the trace of its whereabouts remains. ... When Max Ros was found three days after his first encounter with Arbor Vitae 1958 he was entangled in ivy and woodbine. These plants now grow at the base of the petrified tree...

This public sculpture meets an audience that might not be used to looking at art. The Sculpture is in a public space on the Technical University of Linköping close to FOI and Mjärdevi Science Park. The “trees” aesthetic form attracts people to the site. I hope the people will read the sign and take in the story. If they get real curious they might even look up Max Ros on internet.

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“Ingripandet” at Galleri Skådebanan, 2011, Linköping
(fig.9-13) Skådebanan is a small Gallery in Linköping housed in an old building still very much with the characteristics of an apartment. In the gallery space I wanted to make a fictive room that fit Max Ros. I planned to tell the first chapter of the story when Max Ros meets Arbor Vitae for the first time.

I did not have the intention to make the room “real”. Since the Gallery is small with not too large audience I took the opportunity to experiment. I wanted to see if I could mix multiple ways of communicating in one and the same exhibition.

It was as if Max Ros had just come back from picking mushrooms in the forest. In the doorway a muddy pair of wellington boots stood with teal socks hanging from their shaft. A mushroom basket, an anorak and a fresh scent of a forest was created by leaves resting by the windows and mushrooms in the basket. I wanted to give the feeling that the forest had almost taken a step into the room.

The installation was a room furnished as an apartment from 1958. My aim was to make a room that would bring the audience back to the time when the actual event of the story took place in 1958. There were black and white illustrations portraying different events in the story hung on the walls in appropriate frames for the time. By using the illustrations I wanted to give the viewer the setting and images from the different events of the story.

Another element in the installation was the spoken story. Instead of having the viewer read the story I wanted the viewer to hear the story at the same time as looking at the room and the illustrations for a deeper experience. During the opening this story was orally told by me and after the opening the story was played on a surround sound system. In the background of the narrator was environmental sounds of a forest, eerie wind etc.; sounds that aided in situating the story.

There was also a small “old” black and white photograph of Arbor Vitae (the sculpture installed at Permanens III) hung on one of the walls in order to make a clear connection to the sculpture some of the audience might have already seen.

So what conclusions can I draw from this experiment? As a result from the positive response I received from the audience and the press I would say it was a success. When drawing a conclusion from my own intent, I would say it was a failure. However, I have gained some new knowledge that I take with me.

A problem with the exhibition was that the illustrative property of the illustrations in combination with the soundtrack controlled the room. The illustrations in a sense also made the rooms “authenticity” questionable. I think the installation would have been stronger by separating the illustrations from the installation. I also think I have to be more specific with the consignor and context in order to lessen confusion.

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“Hej Gävel”, at Gävle Konstcentrum, 2012, Gävle

(fig.14-17) In Gävle all the students in my class were asked to make a public art proposals for the city of Gävle.9 We were introduced to Gävle by different guides and studio visits. It was one of the most affected regions in Sweden by the Chernobyl catastrophe 1986 and the exhibition was only one year after the Fukushima catastrophe. I found it important to pick this topic up and since I was also working on the same topic for my Degree Exhibition I felt it convenient.

I based my proposal around a story about the plants Venum Bibentis (Poison drinkers). I presented a dream that Max Ros had prior to and during the Chernobyl catastrophe. This dream eventually led him to a little island in Gavelån (the river that runs through Gävle). On this island the Venum Bibentis grew and Max Ros watched them neutralise radiation. The plants died in the process.

My proposal for a public work in Gävle was to make a monument of these plants in memory of their sacrifice and the Chernobyl catastrophe. As in “Permanens III” in Linköping an historic sign would accompany the sculpture.

If this sculpture would be realised it would mean yet another public mark to draw people in to the bigger story.

Degree Exhibition at Konstfack

The part of the story I will be telling at the degree exhibition will be about Max Ros involvement in Swedish nuclear energy and the Swedish nuclear weapons program. When I started at Konstfack in the Fall of 2010 I “found” by coincidence a forgotten room where Max Ros had worked in secrecy about 1970 – 1990. During the time that Max Ros worked there Sweden's first nuclear reactors were closed, R1, R3 and R4. The Swedish Nuclear weapons program was debated, there was a re-vote on nuclear energy and the Chernobyl catastrophe occurred.

Before Max Ros met Arbor Vitae he used to work at Saab in Linköping. A former colleague who had transferred to LM Ericsson in Stockholm, helped Max Ros get the secret workspace in LM Ericssons premises.

The room will be presented as “authentic”. The room installation of Max Ros former work space will contain texts, images, furniture, grids, secrets and so on.

In the main exhibition space I will present an introduction to Max Ros. There will be guided tours to his work space. The guide will tell the story and explain the details found in Max Ros workspace.


A few days after the opening of the Degree exhibition I plan to launch Max Ros website. There will be illustrated chapters of Max Ros story. Like the first chapter when Max Ros meets Arbor Vitae... New Chapters will then be added as they are completed.

4. Story Aesthetics

Fantasy and Myth

There is a storytelling tradition in the genre of fantasy that comes from fairy tales, folklore and mythology, often depicting nature to be full of magical beings and spirits both good and bad. In fables and myths nature is given a voice. Humans takes on natures forms and traits that makes it easier for us to relate to. These fables and forest spirits are then put in a story in order to explain the world around us. In classic fables humanity is given a voice by wearing nature’s costume. It is not the voice of nature we “hear” in fables but human’s. Like the “Ents” in Lord of the Rings by J.R.R. Tolkien or the many mythologies of forest spirits and gods. In my story about Max Ros I want to reverse that relationship and instead of humanity taking on natures forms I want to give nature human traits in order for us to understand nature.

There is also an aesthetic in Fantasy that has become a style often described as somewhat kitsch. However, there is something in that tradition that captures peoples imagination. For many, including me, it was a door opener into the world of art.

Communicating myth through imagery has a long tradition. When the spoken word in churches was in a foreign language, incomprehensible to many, murals were important for narrating biblical stories. Famous examples of Fantasy/Fairytale books where the illustrations play a mayor role in telling a story are Among Gnomes and Trolls with John Bauers illustrations or Maurice Sendaks picture book Where the Wild Things Are.

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13 Among Gnomes and Trolls, Swedish folklore and fairy tales annual. Founded in 1907 and continuing to this very day. Published by Åhlen och Åkerlund (in Stockholm), John Bauer made illustrations 1907–1910 and 1912–1915.

5. **Methodology**

**The narrative as core**

The story of Max Ros is continuously being written as the project progresses. One might call it a Dystopian Para-fiction. That the project is based on a story does not necessarily mean that the story will be presented nor read like a text based story. Many artists working with narrative in art use elements inherited from other genres. Such as Michael Stevenson who find “forgotten stories” as the one about artist Ian Fairweather, which he presents in exhibition form influenced an anthropology museum aesthetic.\(^{15}\)

Mike Nelson and Christoph Büchel use installation to suggest a narrative without actually narrating in the traditional sense. Large spaces of consecutive rooms are built up like movie sets but without characters. Instead the viewer moves through these spaces trying to establish a narrative.\(^{16}\)

Ilja Kabakov uses the fictional story to relate to the real. His work has a strong commentary on the Soviet Union utopian idea. Stories written by himself are combined with illustrations and installations portraying the stories.\(^{17}\)

"When I submerge into my childhood world, I see it inhabited by a number of the most strange and comic individuals, neighbours of our large, communal apartment. Each one of them, it seemed to me then, had an unusual idea, one all-absorbing passion belonging to him alone."\(^{18}\)

In the following section I compare two installations. “The Man that Flew Into Space from his Apartment” by Ilja Kabakov\(^{19}\) and “Simply Botiful” by Christoph Büchel\(^{20}\). My aim in analysing and comparing their work is to figure out how they used the narrative in their work. In particular I am interested in how they used the installation as a way of communicating a narrative. In relation to my own work I want to build a better understanding of how their different methods worked and where their flaws lay.

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The core in “The Man that Flew Into Space from His Apartment” is a story of ten stories written by Ilja Kabakov in the context of a communal apartment. As the title of the installation suggests, the story is about a man that flew into space from his apartment. The story is written as a testimony by three of the hero’s neighbours that describe him as a person. They also describe events that took place prior to the main event of the story (when the hero launches himself into the cosmos from his apartment), during it (no body was with the hero during the actual launch), and after it had taken place. The installation consists of the apartment as it was left by the investigators after the main event. The room is sealed off by the investigators as described by one of the neighbours. As a visitor of the installation one is able to look into the room through the boards that seal off the room. There you can see some details that the neighbours have described in their testimonies plus a few minor details not mentioned. The neighbours’ testimonies were posted on the wall outside the room.

In Kabakov’s work the viewer remains a spectator of the story and the installation. The written word complements the larger story and the installation illustrates the story, giving the story a physical substance. The written story clarifies the aspect of time through its clear linear narrative. The written story also makes it possible for the viewer to place the events of the story in an evident time-space. One knows that the traces are of something that has happened earlier rather than something going on right now. I believe he gives the fictional story a physical form through the installation and makes “the fictitious” realistic or at least believable/imaginable.

The core in Büchels “Simply Botiful” was the immensely large immersive installation in itself. The rooms were set up in a hyper-realistic way. The context of the gallery was removed with help of the overload of stuff and crammed spaces. Parts of the exhibition were only accessible by crawling through tight semi hidden spaces and climbing steep ladders. A vaguely suggested narrative was formed by the different rooms and their contents. One could start forming some sort of narrative as one visited the different rooms in the installation and then trying to connect them all in one context. The set-up of the installation suggested that its inhabitants had left in hurry, that they were still around somewhere (but out of sight), or might come back at any moment.

In Büchel’s installation there is a possibility of becoming somewhat part of the story and installation, as one actually moves through the physically narrated spaces. The absence of the written word and a linear narration in Büchel’s installation makes the “set” the only tool to tell a specific story. The story is left to interpretation due to the lack of “the written narrative”’s capability of specificity. I think this is one of the reasons for Büchel’s immense scale in his installation. It is as if he needs a bigger installation to compensate for the absence of the written story. I think he uses separate rooms as one uses chapters in a written story, in order to give the suggested narrative complexity and room for interpretation. He uses contradiction

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21 communal apartment = After the 1917 revolution. There were not enough homes in the bigger cities such as Moscow and Leningrad. That led to consolidation and settling in old bourgeoisie and “royal protégés” luxury houses. The new authority forced the families already living in these large houses to live in only one room and the rest of the rooms were divided amongst other families without homes. In these 12 and 16 room-apartments people often ended up living with total strangers sharing kitchen and toilets. Due to a lack of housing up until 1953 hole families ended up living in the same apartment/room often with thin walls revealing most for the other tenants.
and interrelations when he is “telling” the story. One room in his installation is full of bones and in another there is a burnt out scooter in a glass cabinet. When trying to put these two rooms together in “one” context he consequently creates an interesting web of narration.

I think how Kabakov works with the fictitious story in relation to installation very much relates to how I want to work with the story of Max Ros. Through the, written or told, stories’ capability of specificity one can put emotional traits in objects and spaces. I am inspired by how Kabakov manages to give the fictional story a physical form and make “the fictitious” realistic. It is also interesting to note how the written story adds content and context to the installation and therefore adds a scale beyond the actual installation.

Büchel’s none use of absence of the written I find both fascinating and to some degree brave. I like the idea that one experiences a narrative through only the use of the senses. I find work that does not force me to read a five page essay in order to properly digest the work as it was intended is something worth striving for. (If I go to “look” at something I do not want to “read” about it.) I do however in relation to my own work want to add the story to the installation in a more specific or directed way than Büchel. It is still interesting to think how much one can minimise the role of the written and told story in an installation which aim is to tell a story. Büchels’ work becomes somewhat a site for exploration where one does not know what will be around next corner. This I believe ignites one’s natural curiosity leading to putting one’s senses on the alert. Conceptually trying to put all the parts of the installation together in a narrative is what makes his installation compelling.

Other artists that use narrative in a slightly different way are Michael Blum and Walid Raad. Michael Blums installation portraying the apartment of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's secret lover at the 9th Istanbul Biennial, 2005 is an installation I find interest in. The fictional space becomes more like realism since the space itself is both real and present. He set up an apartment as an historical apartment museum. The museum is an institution with an inherent authority. By mimicking these aesthetics in his installation he made the story of the installation more believable and less subject to scrutiny.

Walid Raad’s intricate play and use with whom the consignor is and who’s at the receiving end is very fascinating.

Under the name of the “Atlas Group”22 Walid Raad presented among other documents “The Bachar File” which includes 53 short videotapes produced by Souheil Bachar. Souheil Bachar is a fictive character that Walid Raad places in the historical event of the “Lebanon hostage crisis”. The video tapes are his documentation of the situation.

Walid Raad wants to communicate different things to different audiences and wants to make people aware of and critical to directed information. Only two tapes (#17 and #31) were publicly presented outside of Lebanon. As a person not able to see the other tapes I wonder why are only 2 tapes of 53 tapes available and what content is on the other tapes? Bachar is speaking Arabic on the recordings and is accompanied by a female voice over in English. For

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those that understand both languages a further layer is added when something said is sometimes translated with a different meaning. There are small hints like these that raise the question of authenticity. Other hints are given by how the videos were edited and their aesthetic look. There is definitely a multiplicity in his communication.

**Context of communication**

Way of communication is an ingredient of focus in my project “The Legacy of Max Ros”.

I use the terms fiction and parafiction in this essay. When I refer to something as fiction it is very much like the term used in literature. When I say parafiction I refer to something as being fictional without being purely fictional. In a sense I could also say para-factual or para-real. It has one foot on either side without being the one or the other.

**Presenting fiction as truth**

When publicly presenting the story of Max Ros I present his story as something true. The nature of his story and the visual fantasy aesthetics will in itself reveal that it is not true. As Kabakov questions utopian ideas and how Raad comments on the Lebanese civil wars through fictions using historical facts, I will create a fiction about the environmental crisis.

> You can speculate, make up facts, blend different types of facts, or even lie in art because it is understood as a fundamentally frivolous zone. (Of an artist who has produced functional firearms, one magazine breathlessly wonders whether what he is up to is “something . . . sinister,” or “just art.”)\(^{23}\)

**To whom is something said and what is plausible to that person?**

The way I chose to communicate and to which audience a message is directed plays a major role in my project. What new knowledge and experience can the audience be expected to leave with after having “seen” one of my presentations? What is plausible?

> Parafictioneers produce and manage plausibility. But plausibility (as opposed to accuracy) is not an attribute of a story or image, but of its encounter with viewers, whose various configurations of knowledge and “horizons of expectation” determine whether something is plausible to them. While something similar is true of any artwork—that its meaning is produced in the encounter with the spectator—a parafiction creates a specific multiplicity.\(^{24}\)

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What the audience knows and do not know is an important factor when one chooses how to communicate in order to determine what knew knowledge or experience I expect them to gain. Who is the audience in different contexts and who is “the message” directed towards. When I designed the petrified Arbor Vitae and the proposal for Gävle I tried to think about these things. Since these works are placed in the public space the viewers can be “anybody” that moves in that space. So the encounter with the work can be unexpected and the viewer could have no previous knowledge of the piece itself and have no particular interest in art. So in an attempt to reach out to such an audience I wanted the sculptures to be easily appreciated without having to understand the complete story or its context. The historic signs that accompany the sculptures are in their introduction quite factious (“Archival knowledge”). With the sign the viewer is introduced to the story and those who want more are given a chance to absorb its contents.

In the Degree Exhibition I can expect my audience to know what nuclear power is. They might not know or remember how close the first Swedish nuclear reactors where to the city of Stockholm. I will expect my audience to know that radiation is dangerous but in what way it is dangerous I do not expect them to fully know. The majority of the audience will have some interest and experience at looking at art.

How something is said and who says it
There is also the fact of how something is said and who says it. When someone or an organization with authority says something people have a tendency to believe. Like the Yes Men once simply put it:

“It seems people can accept just about anything if you’re dressed in a suit.”

My project is not about hoaxing people to believe that Max Ros exists and that all the supernatural events that he experiences are in fact true. Even the least sensible person will be able to work that out if they so choose. However, the authenticity is part of the play. The story has to be convincing and I have to portray that conviction when communicating it. The best of actors are the ones that convince us they are the character they are playing.

The possibilities with mixing fiction and facts
When fiction is mixed with fact, people have a tendency to not only question the fiction but also the “facts”. All can be untrue, but since there are “true facts”, maybe what is untrue could be true. Fiction also has a tendency to make people believe in the impossible and therefore hopefully “think outside the box”.

My structure for communication
The time line below is a graph that makes it easier for me to decide on how to communicate in different contexts. As shown in the graph there are three different levels of public and three different ways of communication in “The Legacy of Max Ros”. “Archival, Private and Cultural”.

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In the centre is Max Ros Biography and around that is my own Biography as an “artist”. These are private stories not accessible by the general public. This is knowledge only made public to those who engage in my work. Max Ros’ Biography and time-line is the “red thread” throughout the story that everything refers back to.

At the top level is the public domain of Archival knowledge, knowledge that is based on the rational and scientific. Here you find “facts” that can easily be accessed in public archives. One example of this in my work is in the Gävle public sculpture. The piece is very public and therefore the story on the sign contains easily accessible “archival” facts, for example I refer to the Chernobyl catastrophe 1986 and how radiation spread with the wind across Europe.

The lower level is the public domain of mythology, based on intuitive and emotional knowledge. This is knowledge we have grown up with, stories that are told generation to generation by being passed down through bedtime stories, language lessons, cultural history and religion. This is knowledge people believes in or disbelieves; things that the rational mind might dismiss and the intuitive embrace. It is Folklore, Mythology, Theology and “the supernatural”. For example in the same public presentation as I mentioned in the previous paragraph I also portrayed sentinel plants that neutralise radiation, a process that also kills these plants. They die as martyrs in order to save earth from our doing.

"The intuitive mind is a sacred gift and the rational mind is a faithful servant. We have created a society that honours the servant and has forgotten the Gift!"

Albert Einstein
6. References

Books

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Fig 4 Carl Fredrik Hellström, 2009. Folium Encarnia, photo

Fig 5 Carl Fredrik Hellström, 2010. Maxrosen, photo
Fig 6. Carl Fredrik Hellström, 2011, Arbor almost done.

Fig 7. Carl Fredrik Hellström, 2011, The Historic sign, 50 x 35 x 20 cm, directprint on concrete

Fig 8. Carl Fredrik Hellström, 2011, Petrified Arbor Vitae 2011, 265 High x 380 cm in diameter.
Fig 9. Carl Fredrik Hellström, 2011, Installation view of “Ingripandet”

Fig 10. Carl Fredrik Hellström, 2011, Installation view of “Ingripandet”

Fig 11. Carl Fredrik Hellström, 2011, Installation view of “Ingripandet”

Fig 12. Carl Fredrik Hellström, 2011, Installation view of “Ingripandet”

Fig 13. Carl Fredrik Hellström, 2011, Installation view of “Ingripandet”
Fig 14. Carl Fredrik Hellström, 2012, Model 1:20 of Venum Bibentis

Fig 15. Carl Fredrik Hellström, 2012, Illustration of 1st explosion in Max Ros dream

Fig 16. Carl Fredrik Hellström, 2012, Installation view

Fig 17. Carl Fredrik Hellström, 2012, Illustration of Venum Bibentis