

# Tensta konsthall

**Bernd Krauss**  
**We Are Continuing BBDG**  
 Tensta Konsthall 13.6—29.9 2013  
 Stockholm Music and Arts 2–4.8 2013

A flamboyant and homemade tennis boutique, based on the book **The Truth - My Years With Björn Borg** by Lars Skarke (1993), functions as an introduction to Bernd Krauss' latest project **We Are Continuing BBDG**. In the installation there are a range of used Björn Borg clothes, but no underwear—only the clothes that are no longer in production may be included in the show. The installation brings to life the story of how the famous tennis player's name, under the title of Björn Borg Design Group, became a well-known brand. After, according to communications consultants, the brand had been "abused," the person Björn Borg disappeared from the picture and only the name remained. **We Are Continuing BBDG** is part of the visual arts program at the festival Stockholm Music & Arts, which takes place August 2 to 4 at Skeppsholmen in Stockholm.

More or less all forms of traditional artistic expressions appear in Krauss' nomadic practice. Paintings, objects, drawing, video, photography, performance, etc., but also alternative production models, put in relation to a do-it-yourself culture – handicraft techniques such as carving, pottery,

weaving and carpentry. Different kinds of collective gathering and investigative tactics are recurrent features of this wayward production. The topics covered include everything from sports history and church architecture to urban planning issues and rural themes. The results often land somewhere between satire, absurd nonsense and tactical anti-art.

Along with fellow artists (including Jens Strandberg, Nina Svensson and Michael Thomas), Krauss has conducted a series of workshops and other projects often dependent on the audience's whim and desire to participate. This interactivity also recurs in the more tangible elements of the production; in chaotic material archives, Krauss mixes what seem to be pure art objects with supermarket goods and other items left behind by a consumerist society. These objects become historical and social topographies trying to create emotional ties to their viewer.

### **Self-presentation**

Krauss (born 1968 in Nuremberg) sometimes visits Stockholm. He was educated at the University of Hildesheim. Since 2006 he is core tutor at the master's program in Fine Arts at the Piet Zwart

Institute in Rotterdam. He participates frequently in exhibitions at both artist-driven and more established galleries and museums. His more recent works include **Over the natural under the understood** 2013 (together with Jens Strandberg); **Study group without a car but with a sand pit**, with Nina Svensson at Gävle konstcentrum 2012; **Today this is possible**, Kölnischer Kunstverein, Köln 2012 (partly together with Jan Verwoert); **Camp e-dorf**, Piet Zwart Institute, Erkelsdorf/Oberpfalz 2012 and **Chapel, chapel along the way** with Nina Svensson at Murberget – Länsmuseum Västernorrland 2008. Since 1999 Krauss works with his fanzine/blog **The Sniffler**, exploring both traditional and newer forms of communication and public debate.

berndkrauss.blogspot.com

The exhibition is part of Tensta Konsthall's program line focusing on archives, libraries and collections.

Bernd Krauss introduces the exhibition at 14:00 Thursday, 20.6

We are continuing BBDG // TENSTA Konsthall // SM & AF // 2013 Theater Societät: Simon Frisch (= Björn Borg), Michael Thomas (= Lars Skarke), Head of Purchasing: Constantin Rucker, Advertisement Campaign: Jens Strandberg for malewitchprojects, Björn Borg Design-Prize: Nina Svensson, Costume: TUA Skinnkläder,, AD Bernd Krauss, Literature: **The Truth - My Year with Björn Borg**, Lars Skarke (narrated and written down by Claes Lind), Mån-pocket 1993; parts of the project have earlier been presented in the publication WEI NOTT, Cologne Contemporaries, Köln 2010 and in the exhibition CRAFT/Carl Palm in Stockholm 2011.

#### Theater Societät consists of:

Simon Frisch: Dr. Simon Frisch studied art, art history, literature and film, philosophy and psychology in Freiburg, Barcelona and at the University of Hildesheim; His Ph.D. at Hildesheim and Jena treated the Nouvelle Vague cinema tradition. Frisch is also associate professor at the university of Medellin and Zurich. He now leads the department of film and media studies at the Bauhaus University in Weimar.

Michael Thomas: (Birthday and City unknown) is a retired Cultural Scientist and works today as an Internet graphic designer. In his free time he is also the director and curator of the alternate showroom for contemporary art HINTERCONTI / Hamburg.

Bernd Krauss  
Theater Societät, Repertoire:

**90min, black&white; age restriction18**  
(Theaterhaeuser Hildesheim/  
Weimar/1999)

#### **The Player**

(Marmorsaal/Bad Ems 2001)

#### **Study group Rumänia**

(Staatsbank Berlin 2001)

#### **Eldery Sir seaking for Company**

(Freilichtbuehne St. Pauli/2001)

#### **eleipS ehcsinakirfA** (with Sonja Baeger/ Giti Nourbakhsch/2001)

(Staatsbank Berlin 2001)

#### **The Hunchback of Notre Dame** (Giti Nourbakhsch/2001)

(Staatsbank Berlin 2001)

#### **Hello Kiddy Monchichi** (Giti Nourbakhsch/2001)

(Staatsbank Berlin 2001)

**The Sugarbear starts now** (Kunstverein  
Nuernberg/2001)

**Der, die, das Servant** (Kuenstlerhaeuser  
Worpswede/2004)

**Best of Intentions** (THE STREET/  
Whitechapel Gallery/2008)

**American Soldier** (Goethe Institut New  
York/Performa 09/2009)

Hans Carlsson is an artist, critic and co-worker at Tensta Konsthall.

## Conversation between Bernd Krauss and Hans Carlsson

**Hans Carlsson:** Could you give me some background on **We Are Continuing BBDG**?

**Bernd Krauss:** The exhibition consists of a shop with whacked out Björn Borg products, and other things related to the famous tennis player. The background is Lars Skarke's book **The Truth - My Years With Björn Borg** from 1993. The book describes what happened when the name of Björn Borg, in the formation of the Björn Borg Design Group, and with great help from the companion Skarke, passed from person to brand.

**HC:** Can you tell more about Björn Borg Design Group?

**BK:** BBDG was an umbrella organization for various garment producers operating internationally, with offices in Tokyo and New York. Several different stakeholders: sports managers, producers, banks and, of course, Borg himself with all his money from the pro career. The star's name was supposed to stand for quality.

**BK:** No, there is no outright criticism. But the theme relates to important topics, such as the attempt to make Borg campaign for the Swedish Social Democrat Party. After Borg in 1974, with his huge fortune, moved to the tax haven Monaco, the party also tried to lure him back to Sweden with various benefits. All this says a lot about Swedish history and political tradition. I have also personally learned things about the Swedish history of politics and sports.

**HC:** How do you feel about stepping back and letting others decide the design of your art? Are you trying to emulate Björn Borg's strategy in becoming a brand?

**BK:** It is important to stress that I do not wish to step back. It's me, Bernd Krauss, who is the source of what you see, I will gladly take a curatorial responsibility for this exhibition. But then it should not be about what I'm experiencing. It is important to present material, to organize it and make it available in a new way. As for Björn Borg, he kept himself away from media and publicity. Skarke describes how he hardly said a word during the many years they worked together. He was very keen to start BBDG, but would later have as little as possible to do with the

**HC:** Can you say something about the framing of the work?

**BK:** I have chosen to outsource much of the responsibility to the performance and theater group "Theater Societät" (Simon Frisch, Michael Thomas and Bernd Krauss). By choosing the collective theater format the actual theme comes to the forefront, and the work is less exposed to the risk of becoming a personal sculpture exhibition. The main thing is, after all, that the story of Björn Borg, thirty years after he ended his professional career, reaches out. It's about staging a series of visual thumbnails where the most important—dramatic and undramatic—moments in the male friendship—between Borg and Skarke—gets retold. In fact, after moving to Skeppsholmen, for this year's art program at the Stockholm Music & Arts (2-4 August), the performative elements will be even more significant, in favor of the rather substantial presentation shown here in Tensta. The goal in both cases is to try to understand how BBDG could have functioned today.

**HC:** Can you consider **We Are Continuing BBDG** a critique of commercialism?

group. But in the beginning it did not work so well; the Monaco incident was difficult for both the person and the brand. But today things are different, hardly anyone outside of Sweden born after 1985 associates the name of the star with tennis. So at the end of the day, he got what he wanted.

**HC:** In your project, one can often find a large element of play. An example is the workshop **Studiecirkel utan Bil (- men med en Sandlåda)** (Study group without a car but with a sandpit) where you, along with Nina Svensson, invited by Gävle Art Center, took a sandbox to a square in central Gävle. Passers-by could then build sand models of what a future local community should, according to them, look like. Do you consider playing an artistic method? What do you have to say about Sigmund Freud's famous assumption that the contrast of play is not seriousness, but rather reality?

**BK:** Most often there is no need for art. We, me and Nina, might have thought we were doing art in Gävle, but for those who came to us this was less important. Instead the actual playing became central. I think facts should be handled with little or no respect at times, but, as a groundwork, there must

somehow exist seriousness and a relationship to the present. There is a risk otherwise that it just becomes something fun. But the game has after all an ability to open up and become a sort of democratic, accessible room for opinions and discussions.

**HC:** Collecting is a method you frequently use. And then often a gathering that has a historical basis. To build collections or archives says something about how we view the past. How do you relate to this as an artist? The fact that you are actually writing history?

**BK:** As an artist, I have more freedom than a historian. Perhaps also another ambition – to create a non-hierarchical history where everyone can join in or, in any case, through a kind of physical proximity, it becomes understandable for as many as possible.

**HC:** In art history there are different approaches towards gathering things. Can you name any art-collecting traditions that have been important to you?

**BK:** To begin with, I think it's important to avoid the avant-gardistic belief that

you can really change something. Art has the ability to actively participate in public debate, but guarantees in itself no change. It, like every individual, lives a political life, even without setting up some ideological discourses around itself. I always looked for a tradition that, after the idealized worldview of Conceptual art, made use of the commonplace. For example Raffael Rheinsberg who has a completely non-esoteric relation to the material he collects—everything from rusty stuff and street signs to material that survived museum fires. An aesthetic dialogue can only occur when you really use the things you put together.

**HC:** You also work with writing, a practice going on in various media and contexts. One example is your blog/fanzine, **Der Riecher**, which blends critical reflections on contemporary life with more mundane questions and observations. What is the explanation behind this blog? And how does it relate to your more spatial installations?

**BK:** **Der Riecher** (in english: the nose) is a mix between a diary and a more ordinary

publication. I draw, write and paste by hand, then I take photos that are regularly put online. Again, this is something personal and playfully rolled up in a public sphere, where it can have critical effect. It is important that each “number” of the blog is supplied with markers that are reminiscent of other forms of media. It could be a date indication, or a title, or something else that mimics, for example, the newspaper format. It is all about taking part in a public debate with a re-manufactured public “voice.” I think the death of newspapers, as well as ideology, is shown by the fact that it is even possible to work like this. It is also a bit of this do-it-yourself-but-say-something-important spirit that I wish to highlight in my spatial and social experiments.

**HC:** How do you generally relate to the different places and contexts you exhibit in? What does it mean to exhibit at Tensta Konsthall for you?

**BK:** I do not work site-specifically, but I am interested in creating different networks for contact and understanding. It is all about creating some attraction in the theme and the design that people can possibly relate to.

**HC:** How do you relate to some current ideas in contemporary art? I refer to a kind of re-discovered interest in what the objects around us have to say, and this as irrespective of the human subject.

**BK:** There is, though I am not directly familiar with these new-old traditions of thought, something to collect from what you're talking about. The idea that it in materiality there is knowledge, not shown by other expressions, is, I think, an important insight for artists. It's a bit what I am trying to say with **We are continuing BBDG**, that in this story the things in themselves play an important role. All the products that helped create the history of the Borg cannot be forgotten, people invested their emotions in them, and therefore they got another value. It is through all these gadgets that the relationship between the audience and the artifact that I just mentioned may occur. They create the opportunity for a new conversation, which does not take into account the established notions of the material.