

// Annika Öhrner
// Dan Karlholm
// Anna Rådström
// Charlotte Bydler
// Oscar Svanelid
// Pamela Schultz Nybacka
// Håkan Nilsson (Ed.)

Renegotiations

THE ROLE OF PUBLIC ART IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM



(CC BY 3.0)

The images are not included in creative commons

Södertörns högskola
(Södertörn University)
Biblioteket
SE-141 89 Huddinge

www.sh.se/publications

© the authors

Graphic design
Andreas Karperyd

Printed by
E-print, Stockholm Sweden 2023

Södertörn Academic Studies 91
Södertörn Studies in Art History and Aesthetics 8

ISSN 1650-433X

ISBN 978-91-89504-09-7 (print)
ISBN 978-91-89504-10-3 (digital)



Trycksak
3041 0865

Safety Art:

On Art as a Security/Safety Measure for Public Spaces

//Oscar Svanelid

A recurring idea about publicly funded art is that it should contribute to creating more attractive urban environments. Such initiatives assume that art has an instrumental value, which justifies its utility as a measure to create safety/security. In recent decades, research on public art in the Nordic countries has analyzed the critical role of art and its ability to promote social integration and community.¹ There have also been studies on how public art can play a role in urban development and “placemaking,” which has been understood as a contributing factor in gentrification and increased segregation.² However, a survey of current research shows that the contemporary phenomenon of using public art as a political instrument precisely to enhance safety and security in society has fallen by the wayside.³

This article critically reflects on how public art has been used as a political tool to create safe/secure public environments in Swedish cities. The political use of art for this purpose emerged in the early 2000s but has become increasingly widespread in the last decade. This can reflect the increased insecurity among the country’s population, especially among young and older women, as identified by the Swedish National

1 Sabine Dahl Nielsen, *Kunst i storbyens offentlige rum: konflikt og forhandling som kritiske politiske praksisser [Art in Public Spaces: Conflict and Negotiations as Critical Political Practices]* doctoral thesis (Copenhagen: University of Copenhagen, 2015); Line Marie Bruun Jespersen, “Velkommen udenfor! Kunst som mødesteder i byens rum” [Welcome Outside! Public Art and the Staging of Meeting Places in the City] *Periscope*, 17, (2017), pp. 116-132; Siv Mie Buhl and Werner Hansen, “Home Is to Be Understood: The role of contemporary art museums facing current immigration challenges” in *Flucht und Heimat: Sondierungen der pädagogische Anthropologie [Flight and Homeland: Probing of an educational anthropology]*, eds. Jörg Althans et al. (Weinheim Basel: Juventa Verlag, 2018).

2 Louise Fabian & Kristine Samson, “Claiming Participation – a Comparative Analysis of DIY Urbanism in Denmark”, *Journal of Urbanism: International Research on Placemaking and Urban Sustainability*, 9 (2016), pp. 166-188; Hjørdis Brandrup Kortbek, “Contradictions in Participatory Public Art: Placemaking as an Instrument of Urban Cultural Policy” *The Journal of Arts Management Law and Society*, 49:1 (2018), pp. 1-15.

3 Kjell Caminha, Håkan Nilsson, Oscar S and Mick Wilson, *The Public Art Research Report: A Report on the Current State of Research on Public Art in the Nordic Countries, and in a Wider International Context* (2018). Available at https://statenskonstrad.se/app/uploads/2019/03/Public_Art_Research_Report_2018.pdf. [accessed 11/26/2020].

Council for Crime Prevention in its annual safety surveys.⁴ What interests me is that safety has also been framed as an artistic problem, and my study contributes to understanding how safety is shaped and formed by public artworks. I shall also look into the works' contexts, such as the municipal reports in which the commission is formulated and evaluated. Yet another critical part of what is understood in this article as the "publicness" of art concerns the reception of the works, how they are made the subject of political debate, and other kinds of interactions. This is part of what I, informed by a concept coined by anthropologist Arjun Appadurai, call the "social life" of public art, whereby the public works to be looked into here are best understood as shaped by the encounters and relationships created over time.⁵

The article is divided into two case studies. The first is based on *Stockholmslejon (Stockholm Lions)* by artist Anders Årfelt, the first version of which was exhibited on Drottninggatan in Stockholm in 1995. The works are traffic barriers, designed in the form of lions, that constitute concrete examples of how public art is used to prevent access and create safer, more secure streets. This study will also discuss what happened to *Stockholm Lions* during and after the terrorist attack on Drottninggatan in 2017, when their security function was severely put to the test. *Stockholm Lions* did not fall under the supervision of the Cultural Administration but was created on behalf of the transport department in Stockholm, demonstrating that the artistic design, in this case, came about under the supervision of another administrative body. The second case study analyzes the City of Gothenburg's significant investment in light art in tunnels under the project *Safe, Beautiful City* (2005-2018). The project resulted in around ten light works, which local artists created in collaboration with lighting designers. The aim was to beautify and create safety, mainly in the city's vulnerable areas. Through these chosen cases, my aim is to highlight a few examples of public art, which were created with the specific purpose of contributing to urban safety/security. They will allow me to capture certain norms within this kind of public art, in which light art and street barriers often are used as standard solutions.

4 Sofie Lifvin et al., *Nationella trygghetsundersökningen 2020: om utsatthet, otrygghet och förtroende [National Safety Survey 2020: On vulnerability, insecurity and trust]* (Stockholm: Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention, 2020), pp. 10-11.

5 Arjun Appadurai, *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1986).

With these cases, I intend to show a diversity in the security/safety task itself. While Åstrand's lions in central Stockholm were related to terrorism, the light art in Gothenburg was aimed at residents in the city's suburban areas.

The safe/secure city

An increased interest in the potential of public art to contribute to safety can be understood in the context of the global project to design safe cities. Notions of the safe, secure city can be found in policies where crime control and prevention strategies are part of more general measures to promote the well-being of the urban population.⁶ The concept is associated with democratic participation, social cohesion, ecological sustainability, safety, and security. This notion is in line with the recent *smart city* trend, where digitalization and new technologies are combined with other forms of data collection, such as citizen dialogue, and are considered tools that can help optimize the quality of life of city residents.⁷ The smart city has been seen as a democratic tool for urban development. Still, it has also been criticized as part of the neoliberal agenda, according to which social problems are addressed by way of technological rather than socio-political solutions.⁸

The contemporary construction of the smart, safe city is closely linked to the multidisciplinary approach known as "Crime Prevention through Environmental Design" (CPTED). The concept was coined in the 1970s by criminologist C. Ray Jeffery and further developed by architect and urban planner Oscar Newman, among others. The guiding principle behind this approach is that crime can be prevented through the built environment, which can be summed up by the motto "the opportunity makes the thief".⁹ Crime prevention through architectural design, which is seen as a form of situational crime prevention, continues to be promoted as an effective measure for creating safer urban

6 Carina Listerborn, "Feminist Struggle Over Urban Safety and the Politics of Space," *The European Journal of Women's Studies*, 23:3, 2016, pp. 251-264; Carina Listerborn, *Trygg stad: diskurser om kvinnors rädsla i forskning, policyutveckling och lokal praktik, [Safe City: Discourses on Women's Fear in Research, Policy Development and Local Practices]*, doctoral thesis (Gothenburg: Chalmers University of Technology, 2002).

7 Devi Mega Risdiana & Tony Dwi Susanto, "The Safe City: Conceptual Model Development - A Systematic Literature Review," *Procedia computer science*, 161 (2019), pp. 291-299.

8 Shannon Mattern, *A City Is Not a Computer: Other Urban Intelligences* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2021).

9 Oscar Newman, *Defensible Space: Crime Prevention Through Urban Design* (New York: MacMillan, 1972)

environments. However, many now advocate what has come to be called the second generation CPTED. This approach is a response to a common criticism of Newman, namely that he underestimated the importance of social factors in crime. His methods have also been criticized for creating disciplined and dehumanized urban spaces as well as for contributing to gentrification.¹⁰ Second generation CPTED has generally incorporated these criticisms, for example, by grounding situational crime prevention in democratic processes that seek to engage the local community.¹¹ When situational crime prevention was widely introduced in Sweden in the 2000s, it was often combined with social measures, attributed to the features of the Swedish welfare state.¹² However, urban theorist Carina Listerborn, who has researched safety issues in Swedish cities, has argued that contemporary notions of the safe city are usually based on the interests of the white middle class. This, she argues, undermines already marginalized social groups, such as racialized women and their experiences of racist and sexist violence in public spaces.¹³ The safe city is often underpinned by a post-critical discourse based on a universal definition of quality of life and well-being. Still, my investigation shows that it is crucial to understand that feelings of safety are formed in a politicized field. Therefore, in relation to contemporary safety art, it is necessary to discuss which groups have interpretive prerogatives and to highlight the adverse effects of such projects, which in my analysis, are linked to issues of racism and gender.

Although the study of the safe/secure city is an established and

-
- 10 Sarah Schindler, "Architectural Exclusion: Discrimination and Segregation Through Physical Design of the Built Environment," *The Yale Law Journal*, 124 (2015), pp. 1934-2024; Chiara Certomà, "Expanding the 'Dark Side of Planning': Governmentality and Biopolitics in Urban Garden Planning," *Planning theory*, 14:1 (2015), pp. 23-43; Paul Cozens & Terence Love, "The Dark Side of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Criminology*, (2017), <https://oxfordre.com/criminology/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264079.001.0001/acrefore-9780190264079-e-2> [accessed 11/26/2020].
- 11 For discussion of this see Walter S. DeKeseredy, Joseph F. Donnermeyer and Martin D. Schwartz, "Toward a Gendered Second Generation CPTED for Preventing Woman Abuse in Rural Communities," *Security Journal*, 22:3 (2009) p. 178; Cozens & Love "The Dark Side of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)," op.cit.
- 12 Kerstin Johansson, "Crime prevention cooperation in Sweden: A regional case study," *Journal of Scandinavian Studies in Criminology and Crime Prevention*, 15, 2014, pp. 143-158; Asifa Iqbal and Vainia Ceccato, "Is CPTED Useful to Guide the Inventory of Safety in Parks? A Study Case in Stockholm, Sweden," *International Criminal Justice Review*, 26:2 (2016), pp. 150-168.
- 13 Listerborn, "Feminist Struggle Over Urban Safety and the Politics of Space", op.cit., pp. 251-264; Carina Listerborn, "Geographies of the Veil: Violent Encounters in Urban Public Spaces in Malmö, Sweden," *Social & Cultural Geography*, 16:1 (2015), pp. 95-115.

multifaceted field of research, the role of public art in this context is less explored. However, there is an overlap with research that discusses how public art is used within urban development and gentrification. Cultural theorist Josephine Berry has analyzed how public art in the UK in the 21st century has been assimilated by neoliberal urban development, creating environments optimized for clickstreams, differentiated marketing, and financial gain. She argues that modern art's democratization of the Duchampian "creative act," echoed in the participatory and new genre public art of the 1990s, culminated in the public art of the neoliberal city. Berry also highlights how public art is used as a symbol of an inclusive social community, but which at the same time is undermined by privatization and the suppression of socio-political mobilization.¹⁴ Although safety/security-creating art may seem compatible with strategies for urban development in which undesirable individuals and behaviors are no longer acceptable in urban spaces, it would be misleading to think of the use of art for this function solely as an outcome of neoliberalism. More nuanced studies are needed in order to isolate the role of public art in creating contemporary safe/secure cities. This is where the present article seeks to contribute.

Although security art has not been manifested the same way in the past, it builds on an idea of socially instrumentalized art. Art historian Jessica Sjöholm Skrubbe has described how the Swedish cultural debate of the 1960s and 1970s was characterized by a view of public art as a socio-political tool. The bourgeois idea of art as a form of education was re-actualized in the context of the Social Democratic project to educate citizens in the welfare state. She argues that public art aimed to contribute to the creation of "positive foundations for public life [...]"¹⁵ as well as "a sense of community that characterized a *Gemeinschaft within the framework* of a *Gesellschaft*."¹⁶ In this perspective, contemporary safety art is seen as a bearer of the legacy of the welfare state and its notion of the vital role of public art in building a functioning society. However, this is performed on a

14 Josephine Berry, "Everyone is Not an Artist: Autonomous Art Meets the Neoliberal City," *New Formations*, 84/85 (2015), pp. 20-22 and 38.

15 Jessica Sjöholm Skrubbe, *Skulptur i folkhemmet: den offentliga skulpturens institutionalisering, referentialitet och rumsliga situationer 1940-1975 [Sculpture in the Swedish Welfare State. Institutionalisation, referentiality and spatial situations 1940-1975]*, doctoral thesis (Göteborg: Makadam, 2007), p. 290.

16 Sjöholm Skrubbe, *Skulptur i folkhemmet [Sculpture in the Swedish Welfare State]*, op. cit p. 289.

different premise than in the 1960s and 1970s, since currently public art is used to manage security and safety issues. Rather than creating a communal safety for all based on the representation of the welfare society's imaginary world, the examples examined in this article use public art as a targeted measure to increase safety/security in places.

Stockholmslejon (Stockholm Lions)

Anders Årfelt's *Stockholmslejon* (*Stockholm Lions*) have stood guard at Drottninggatan in Stockholm since 1995. The works were created before visions of safety/security began to feature more frequently in municipal public art policy documents, making them veritable pioneers in the field this article addresses. The lions are strategically placed at street intersections and act as roadblocks to keep pedestrians safe on this busy pedestrian street in central Stockholm. Sculpted from fully cast concrete with a polished surface and undulating manes, these male lions also contribute to the artistic decoration of the road. *Stockholm Lions* have been part of Stockholm's public space for 25 years and have found their way into many homes with miniature replicas having been sold. However, the artist behind these works is less well known. Årfelt began his career by showing charcoal pencil drawings of everyday objects, such as buns and fig trees, at the Nationalmuseum's *Unga Tecknare* (*Young Draughtsmen*) exhibition in 1959. In the 1960s, he was a student at the Royal Institute of Art in Stockholm and then studied to become an art teacher at Konstfack – University of Arts, Crafts, and Design. His first public artwork, *Boll med skruv* (*Ball with a Curve*) (1986), stands outside a sports hall in Visby and consists of an eight-meter-high concrete sculpture depicting the dynamic movement of a tennis ball through space. In the 1990s, Årfelt began working with traffic barriers as an art form, first with *Gutebaggar* (*Gute-Wethers*) on Gotland and afterward with *Stockholm Lions*. In the 2010s, the artist created *Säfstaholmsäpplen* (*Säfstaholm Apples*) in Vingåker, which serve the same function.

Årfelt's *Stockholm Lions* are physically anchored to the site and have firm connections to the symbolism of the city ward. The work engages in dialogue with the lion in the Swedish Coat of Arms and the 18th-century French artist Bernard Foucquet's lion sculptures below Stockholm Castle. Lions are a common symbol of royal power but they function as a religious motif as well. The Old Testament is full of lions, and the predator often appears in icons and ornaments in Romanesque and

medieval churches, even in the Nordic countries. Art historian Morten Stige describes how the Christian lion is characterized by kindness and a pathos of justice. Christian legends have depicted lions sleeping with their eyes open, thus protecting the congregation from the presumed dark forces of evil. In other words, it is a tame lion that Christianity has metamorphosed into the pastoral shepherd, characterized by its constant vigilance over and protection of the faithful.¹⁷

Stockholm Lions share features with the pastoral lions of Christianity, where they stand guarding pedestrians on Drottninggatan. But they have neither explicit religious claims nor the aggressive expressions that have been characteristic of royal lions. Unlike the lions in the Coat of Arms of Sweden, *Stockholm Lions* do not bare their teeth and they also lack the protruding, twisting tongues of their counterparts. Nor do these lions turn outwards toward an imagined enemy; their calm and contemplative demeanor instead signals an inner peace. This distinguishes them from the Lion of Saint Mark, whose wings rise above the people and which has historically been used as a fascist symbol.¹⁸ Instead, the *Stockholm Lions* greet the individual as an equal and have a folksy character, as the older lions, whose backs have been polished to a fine sheen after bearing toddlers on their backs, stand testament to. During my visits to Drottninggatan, I noticed that the lions are also used as a collection point for gloves, umbrellas, and other lost items. The lions' association with safety/security thus comes not only from their function as traffic barriers but also from their everyday use.

17 Morten Stige, "The Lion in Romanesque Art, Meaning or Decoration?" *Tahiti*, 6:4 (2016), o pag.

18 For an analysis of Italian fascism's use of the Lion of Saint Mark during the interwar period, as well as the anti-fascist "lion hunt" see Kate Ferris, *Everyday Life in Fascist Venice, 1929-40* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 86-87.



Anders Årfelt, *Stockholm Lions*, 2017, Photo: Jonas Ekströmer / TT

Terror

Årfelt's lions underwent a dramatic transformation in April 2017 when the Islamist Rakhmat Akilov hijacked a truck and drove it at high speed down Drottninggatan. The terrorist attack killed five people and injured many more. The news stream published images showing a lion that had been rammed and dragged several hundred meters in front of the speeding truck. After decades of a quiet and relatively anonymous social life in the public space, *Stockholm Lions* received considerable media attention, both nationally and internationally. The lions were described as heroes on social media and Designorget's miniatures sold out in just a few days.¹⁹

People who were on Drottninggatan during the attack told the media how the lion, which became stuck in front of the truck, alerted them to

19 "Ny roll för laddad storsäljare hos Designorget: 'Symbol för att värna staden'" [New Role for an Emotionally Charged Bestseller at Designorget: 'Symbol to Protect the City'], *Market*, 8/12/2017, <https://www.market.se/nyhet/ny-roll-for-laddad-storsaljare-hos-designorget-symbol-for-att-varna-staden>. [accessed 11/26/2020].

the attack and saved their lives. But at the same time, the images of the fallen lion circulating in the media conveyed that these artistic traffic barriers could not fully withstand the terrorist attack. Rather than being interpreted as having failed in their function, the lions drew the public's sympathy. Like a police car parked at the site and the memorial wall created on the shop window of the Åhléns department store, the lions were adorned with flowers, teddy bears, and messages of love. By being swept up in messages of reconciliation and love, their position as the city's kind protectors in the fight against terrorism was reaffirmed.

During the mourning process that followed the terrorist attack, the public related to the notion of safety the lions expressed. *Stockholm Lions* took on the role of a spontaneous memorial, which, according to ethnologist Billy Ehn, is characterized by a kind of collage of objects and messages with an emotional charge. These memorials act as media for transforming inner grief into "something that can be touched and shared with the outside world [...]" and they thus have the dual function of "saving both the one who remembers and the one who is remembered."²⁰ Like Ehn's description, the lions were transformed after the attack into a kind of public altar, where the public went to find comfort and intimacy. They became surfaces upon which to project a range of emotions and a place to share the traumatic memory of the attack, which helped people process these emotions. With their calm and contemplative demeanor, the flower-covered lions seemed to hover almost in a spiritual realm. This otherworldly transcendence was therapeutic at a time when people were turning to art to heal an open wound. Spontaneous memorials, however, are temporary and the memories and emotions projected onto them are rarely allowed to remain.²¹ This was the case with *Stockholm Lions* when, after the Easter weekend, a few weeks after the attack, the municipality of Stockholm decided to clean up the flowers and messages of love placed next to the lions, restoring the place to its original form. However, the memorial wall created at Åhléns after the terrorist attack was dismantled and moved to the Kulturhuset on the other side of Sergels Torg. Today, the

20 Billy Ehn, "Hos mig kommer du alltid finnas kvar": Monumentaliseringens uttrycksformer ["With Me You Will Always Be There": The Expressions of Monumentalisation] in *Minnesmärken: att tolka det förflutna och besvärja framtiden* [*Memorials: To Interpret the Past and Conjure the Future*], ed. Jonas Frykman & Billy Ehn (Stockholm: Carlsson, 2007), pp. 348-350.

21 Ehn, "Hos mig kommer du alltid finnas kvar" ["With Me You Will Always Be There"], op.cit., p. 350.

wall is included in the Stockholm City Museum's collection, and the museum has also set up a website that preserves personal accounts of the attack and other visual documentation.²²

In parallel with the public glorification of the *Stockholm Lions*, a political debate ensued in the media, discussing the status and function of the works as a security measure. Public art was thus swept up into the mainstream of Swedish debate on terrorism that followed the attack, which was characterized by its focus on the question of future measures to prevent terrorist attacks.²³ Just one day after the attack, Fredrik Jurdell, then deputy mayor of Stockholm, confessed in an interview in *Sydsvenskan* that Drottninggatan lacked terrorist preparedness. Jurdell also notes that the lions had not been designed to withstand this kind of truck attack, which he described as "a pure question of gravity."²⁴ The emotionalism that characterized the public reception of the lions after the attack thus contrasted with the security-oriented viewpoint in political discourse. Instead of highlighting the qualitative function of the works as a tool to help the mourning process, they were seen as examples of an outdated security calculus where terrorist truck attacks had not been inserted into the equation. This shows how public art's security function is shaped in relation to historical events and physical characteristics, which connects *Stockholm Lions* to the discussion about how the function of public art as a security measure has been affected by terrorism.

Lions XL

The global jihadist network to which Akilov belonged, as well as terrorists from other parts of the political spectrum and their copycats, used vehicles and cars as machines of war in several attacks during this period. Cities worldwide have taken measures to protect themselves against this form of terror, including surveillance cameras, stricter

22 Elin Nystrand von Unge, *Samla samtid: insamlingspraktiker och temporalitet på kulturhistoriska museer i Sverige [Collecting Contemporary: Collecting Practices and Temporality at Museums of Cultural History in Sweden]*, doctoral thesis (Stockholm: Stockholm University, 2019), chapter 5.

23 Lars Nord, Karl-Arvid Färm and Lena Jendel, *Fyra terrordåd, fyra mediebilder. En studie av svenska mediers bevakning av attackerna i Paris och Köpenhamn 2015 samt i Stockholm 2017 [Four Terrorist Acts, Four Media Images. A study of Swedish Media Coverage of the Attacks in Paris and Copenhagen in 2015 and in Stockholm in 2017]* (Sundsvall: DEMICOM, Mid Sweden University, 2018) p. 62.

24 "Betonglejon står inte emot en lastbil," [Concrete Lion Can't Stand up to Truck,] *Sydsvenskan*, 04/08/2017.

access control, and closed streets.²⁵ Terrorism preparedness, as mentioned above, has been criticized for reducing the social life of public spaces and leading to the design of areas that allow people to pass through as quickly as possible. At the same time, there are examples of “softer” measures where signs, flower boxes, and other street designs are used to prevent truck attacks.²⁶ The City of Stockholm’s initiative to continue using public art as a security/safety measure exemplifies this softer approach. The ruling red-green-pink bloc (FI, V, MP, and S) decided to procure new *Stockholm Lions*, which included a couple of innovations. Firstly, the city commissioned new lions. A proportion of these were female lions, which evened out the gender balance; all previously commissioned lions had been male. Secondly, a larger and heavier version of *Stockholm Lions* was procured, known in municipal documents as *Lions XL*. These were males and placed on Drottninggatan alongside a troop of smaller, first edition *Stockholm Lions* to strengthen terrorist preparedness and further contribute to the artistic ornamentation of the street. In addition, the municipality installed heavy flower boxes to further enhance the area’s terrorist preparedness.

The effect of the terrorist attack on the artistic design of the street can thus be summarized quantitatively. Before the terrorist attack, there were 30 lions on Drottninggatan, each weighing 900 kilos. After the terrorist act, 90 lions guarded the same street; 70 of the old format and 20 *Lions XL*, weighing 4 tons each. The terrorist attack thus resulted in a threefold increase in the number of *Stockholm Lions* and a fivefold increase in their total weight. As Fredrik Jurdell pointed out in the quote above, the security function of art was narrowed down to a purely quantitative determination, which did not reflect the elusive qualitative values that emerged in my earlier discussion of the encounter between the lions and the grieving public.²⁷

Still, center-right politicians dismissed the red-green-pink investment in additional *Stockholm Lions* and the new *Lions XL* as an empty gesture. In an opinion piece in *Expressen*, Christian Democrat Erik Slottnér called for “a much higher level of ambition in terms of physical barriers

25 Vincent Miller and Keith Hayward “‘I Did My Bit’: Terrorism, Tarde and the Vehicle-Ramming Attack as an Imitative Event,” *British Journal of Criminology*, 59 (2018) pp.1-23.

26 Cozens & Love, “The Dark Side of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED),” *op cit*.

27 “Betonglejon står inte emot en lastbil,” [Concrete Lion Can’t Stand Up to Truck,] *Sydsvenskan*, 4/8/2017.

against terrorist attacks.”²⁸ He suggested that Stockholm should instead use technical solutions to strengthen its terrorist preparedness. As an example, he mentioned the height-adjustable traffic barriers installed at the entrance to Rosenbad in the form of round pillars. In this political debate, what is at stake is the issue of counterterrorism and notions of the (non-)function of public art in creating a safe/secure city. The political discussion of this was based on a consensus that terrorist preparedness must be strengthened. However, there was an apparent conflict between views that this should be addressed through purely technical measures or through art and floral decorations. A common criticism of technological solutions is that they can be counterproductive, since they risk increasing the public’s sense of insecurity, which is seen as something that undermines the notion of the public realm as an open and accessible space.²⁹ The City of Stockholm’s decision to continue to use public art in the form of traffic barriers reflects their idea that softer approaches can counter even terror.

This means that Stockholm’s physical security measures should be seen as a work of art and, at the same time, as a way of cementing the idea of a public traumatized by terror. In this perspective, *Lions XL* represents something beyond a larger and heavier sculpture; it represents a notion of a kind of security that differs from the lightweight predecessor and points at an ambiguous ontological definition of public art. The lions are a direct response to the terrorist act, but they lack any notations or markings referring to this event. They are thus neither monuments nor memorials but rather establish a dialectical relationship between forgetting and remembering. Their physical form has incorporated the memory of the terrorist act. At the same time, the lack of any markings diverts attention from this very act and the trauma that goes with it. If the old lions provided a sense of safety by supporting the public’s grief process in the immediate aftermath of the event, *Lions XL* symbolizes the political need to manifest not only the restoration of safety in the public space but the enhancement of security as well. To this end, public art has been updated for the age of terrorism, seeking to ensure

28 Erik Slottner, "När ska S börjar ta terrorhotet på allvar?" [When Will Social Democrats Start to Take the Terrorist Threat Seriously?], *Expressen*, 03/30/2018.

29 Schindler, "Architectural Exclusion: Discrimination and Segregation Through Physical Design of the Built Environment," op.cit.; Cozens & Love, "The Dark Side of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)," op.cit.

that the social interaction, artistic ornamentation and commerce of the city streets can continue without dwelling on the trauma of the attack.

Light art in tunnels

Here, in this government-improved and approved housing with too much man-made light, the moon did nothing kind. The planners believed that dark people would do fewer dark things if there were twice as many streetlamps as anywhere else. Only in fine neighborhoods and the country were people entrusted to shadow.³⁰

I will now focus on the most extensive investment in light art as a measure for public safety in Sweden to date, which was realized in Gothenburg under the project *Safe, Beautiful City* (2005-2018). The project's overall aim was "to create safer and more beautiful places in the city through measures in the physical environment."³¹ This involved several measures, and here I will discuss the investment in light art, which resulted in around ten art works in Gothenburg's tunnels during the project period. The light art was targeted at the city's so-called vulnerable areas. According to the governing red-green bloc (V, MP, and S), the project would strengthen residents' right to safe and beautiful environments in their neighborhoods. The placement of the light art in the suburbs was promoted as a democratic initiative based on the perception that the suburbs had been disadvantaged in relation to urban development in the central parts of the city. Another parameter cited was that residents in vulnerable areas were the most insecure.³² Further background to the project was Gothenburg's aim to position itself at the forefront of the technological development of the smart, safe city of today. To this end, the light art in the tunnels was launched as the city's pilot project for *Lighting Urban Community*

30 Toni Morrison, *Love* (Knopf: New York, 2003), p. 39.

31 Municipality of Gothenburg, *Trygg, vacker stad 2005-2018* [*Safe, Beautiful City 2005-2018*]. Available at https://goteborg.se/wps/portal/enhetssida/trygg%2C-vacker-stad!/ut/p/z1/04Sj9CPyKssy0xPLMnMz0vMAfljo8ziTYzcdQy9TAy9_X18nAwcDZ2dgoL8Qg3dg430wwkpiA-JKG-AAjgb6XvpR6Tn5SRCrHPOSjC3S9aOKUtNSi1KL9EqLgMIZJSUFxVaqBqoG5eXleun5-ek5qX-rj-bmqBti0Z0QXl-hHoKUrL8iNqPJDXcEAHTKex8!/dz/d5/L2dBISEvZ0FBIS9nQSEh/ [accessed 11/26/2020].

32 Maria Börjesson & Mathias Stenback, *Trygg, vacker stad 2005-2018* [*Safe, Beautiful City 2005-2018*] (Gothenburg: Park- och naturförvaltningen, City of Gothenburg, 2019), p. 33, p. 4.

International (LUCI), a global network of cities working to promote the development of urban lighting.³³

The light art in the tunnels was realized through a collaboration between *Göteborg Konst* (Gothenburg Art), a section within the Department of Culture, the Transport Department, artists, and the architectural firm White Arkitekter. The project focused primarily on artists who had completed their education and/or were residents in Gothenburg. As a result of the project's democratic aims, focus groups were created where residents were asked questions about their experiences of safety and insecurity. Some artists also established collaborations with schools and after-school centers and created workshops with residents in the areas concerned. The project's focus on social aspects and citizen dialogue in its work to increase safety can thus be seen as a literal example of the second generation of CPTED. Based on the qualitative and quantitative data collection, the City of Gothenburg formulated a concept of the unsafe tunnel that laid the foundation for the art commission. The unsafe tunnel was said to be characterized by "the difficulty of surveying the environment both inside and outside the tunnels, both during the day and at night, where they are used for drug dealing and/or sleeping, unauthorized traffic in the tunnels, dazzling and uneven lighting."³⁴ Here, insecurity (lack of safety) is defined as a combination of technical and social components. By improving lighting, art is offered as a way to help remove the social elements that give rise to insecurity in these environments.

The increased safety, which the artistically designed lighting in the tunnel was expected to create, was thus based on the exclusion of individuals and behaviors categorized as unsafe. This makes it possible to conceive of them as the negative target group for the project. It supports the view of criminologist Elen Midtveit that symbolic measures for situational crime control are not always less exclusionary. She discusses this by analyzing how opera music and Christmas carols were played at the entrance to Københavns Hovedbanegård in the early 2000s, which she understood as a targeted measure to remove drug dealers and homeless

33 <https://goteborg.se/wps/portal/start/gator-vagar-och-torg/gator-och-vagar/belysning> [accessed 11/26/2020].

34 *Trygg, vacker stad 2016* [*Safe, Beautiful City 2016*] (Gothenburg: Park- och naturförvaltningen, City of Gothenburg, 2019) p. 12. Available at [http://www5.goteborg.se/prod/intraservice/namndhandlingar/samrumportal.nsf/93ec9160f537fa30c12572aa004b6c1a/d900d4206299b-850c12580b900358dbe/\\$FILE/%C2%A7%2029.3%20Bilaga%202%20Arsrapport%202016%20Trygg%20vacker%20stad.pdf](http://www5.goteborg.se/prod/intraservice/namndhandlingar/samrumportal.nsf/93ec9160f537fa30c12572aa004b6c1a/d900d4206299b-850c12580b900358dbe/$FILE/%C2%A7%2029.3%20Bilaga%202%20Arsrapport%202016%20Trygg%20vacker%20stad.pdf) [accessed 11/26/2020]

people from this place. This created a symbolic barrier, which according to Midtveit, was based on the notion that the undesirables did not identify with opera music and, because it was played at a high volume, made it unbearable for them to loiter for very long. She further assumes that this was not a measure to address the problems of drug dealing and homelessness but a deliberate attempt to use opera as a barrier to create safe spaces where these urban phenomena do not occur.³⁵ It was thus problematic that the exclusionary mechanisms of high culture were combined with technology to render vulnerable groups and social problems invisible. Similarly, according to Gothenburg municipality, the light art in the tunnels can be understood as a strategy to change the character of these areas, moving what residents had identified as insecurity factors out of sight.

Light art as decoy and exclusion

However, there is an incongruity between the municipality's assignment and definition of an unsafe tunnel, on the one hand, and, on the other, how this was subsequently implemented in the light art installation created within the framework of *Safe, Beautiful City*. Judging from my visits to the site, there are no artworks that functioned as the kind of exclusionary barriers that Midtveit discussed. Instead, the artworks had in common that they made the tunnels more familiar, often achieved by introducing abstract nature motifs and forms of interaction. Artist Marie Dahlstrand was commissioned to illuminate a pedestrian tunnel in Angered, an area in eastern Gothenburg that has recently attracted negative media attention as a center for organized crime and gang violence. The same year that Dahlstrand's *Pieces of time/Pieces of sky* (2017) was installed in a pedestrian tunnel connecting two schools, Angered launched a local urban development program that aimed in part to create more vibrant street environments to tackle widespread problems.

In the work, Dahlstrand has installed circular lights in changing colors at the tunnel's entrances and placed grey ceramic shapes over the interior walls like fragments of a dreamscape. I see her artistic design as an attempt to make the tunnel a pleasant environment and thus invite

35 Elen Midtveit, "Crime Prevention and Exclusion: from Walls to Opera Music," *Journal of Scandinavian Studies in Criminology and Crime Prevention*, 6:1 (2005), pp. 32-35.

more people to choose this route. Once inside the tunnel, the ceramic dreamscape lulls passers-by into a contemplative calm that is likely intended to reduce the anxiety of passing through the tunnel. Such use of light art to attract people into the tunnels is echoed in most of the works, although they employ different artistic strategies.

The artist Peter Ojstersek collaborated with lighting designers to create the light artwork *More Eyes* (2015) in a pedestrian underpass between the suburbs of Frölunda and Tynnered. The grey and bare tunnel walls have been covered with luminescent LED crystals that pulsate in different colors. During my visits to the site, I observed how these attracted children to explore their senses and play as they passed through the tunnel, which according to Kajsa Sperling from White Arkitekter, was one of the intentions of the work. She explains: “when people pause, the tunnel becomes more populated, making even more people want to use it.”³⁶ The artwork is thus intended to delay the passage through the tunnel, which is thought to increase the flow of pedestrians. As we have seen, the aim of light art was more than just to improve the safety of the inhabitants. By increasing the circulation of people in these places, it was thought that groups and behaviors associated with insecurity would disappear, which is consequently interpreted as a desired negative function of this interactive artwork.

The light art in the tunnels does not evoke discomfort but invites moments of contemplation and interaction. It is not at the level of the individual work that the municipal security art assignment (keeping the homeless away) can be said to be realized. Instead, this can be seen as a potential consequence of the function as, on the one hand, a decoy, and on the other hand, a mechanism of exclusion. In this way, the light art actualizes what the architectural theorist Jane Jacobs in the 1960s called “natural surveillance.”³⁷ Jacobs took issue with the trajectory of urban development in American cities, which assumed that inner cities needed regeneration, and also criticized the increased police presence. Instead, she suggested that policing should be built into the urban environment. Like the French philosopher Michel Foucault, Jacobs discerned a link between surveillance and discipline but argued that this was fundamentally desirable. Rather than funding major policing initiatives, Jacobs argued that cities could prevent crime just

36 <https://whitearkitekter.com/se/projekt/ljuskonst-i-tunnlar/> [accessed 11/26/2020].

37 Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, 50th anniversary edition (Modern Library edition. New York: Modern Library, 2011).

as effectively by creating environments where the public was aware that their behavior was being monitored by what Jacobs called “eyes on the street.”³⁸

Jacob’s perspective is, as I mentioned earlier, recognizable in the light art created under the auspices of *Safe, Beautiful City*. This is most evident in Ojstersek’s work, whose title *More Eyes* is reflected in the eye-like crystals of light on the walls but also in the increase of the passing pairs of eyes that the project sought to achieve. Rather than being understood as a transport route, the municipality thus saw the suburban tunnel as strategically crucial for creating a safer and better monitored urban landscape. By inviting the residents to view light art, the municipality also encourages them to spend time in environments where they look and feel looked at by others.

The blood in us

The project *Safe, Beautiful City* was shelved by the center-right majority that took over the city council after the 2018 elections. The last light artwork completed within the project was Ola Åstrand’s *Blodet i oss* (*The Blood in Us*) (2019), the theme of which differs from the other works and suggests a more critical, or perhaps even ironic, approach to the municipality’s security art assignment. Since the absence of critique is a characteristic of much of contemporary safety art, which, as mentioned earlier, is characterized by its post-critical discourse in which safety/security-enhancing effects are central, I will analyze Åstrand’s work in more detail in the following.

Åstrand has been active in Gothenburg’s art scene for several decades and has always maintained a position as an outsider. In the 1980s, when Åstrand was a student at HDK-Valand – the Academy of Art and Design – he turned against what he perceived as the hegemony of postmodernism in art education. Instead of French philosophy, Åstrand turned to music and was a guitarist for some time in the punk band TT Reuter. Punk also found its way into his art, characterized by a firm rejection of conformity. In an interview in 2017, Åstrand was asked how he views art, to which he replied: “Art is a weapon to fight oppression and the bourgeoisie [...] not to make a social career or to

38 Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, op.cit. chapter 1.

serve the rich.”³⁹ However, creating municipally funded safety art for *Safe, Beautiful City* undeniably put the artist’s punk self-image at risk. Åstrand’s light artwork has been installed in a short pedestrian and car tunnel in Kviberg in eastern Gothenburg. Over the past decade, Kviberg has undergone extensive urban development with high-density housing and the opening of a large sports and recreation center. Socio-political tensions also characterize Kviberg. In particular, the area’s flea market has been the subject of political debate, where voices from the Confederation of Swedish Enterprise and the Sweden Democrats claim that the market is being used for organized crime and have called for its immediate closure.⁴⁰ For a couple of years now, a non-profit cultural center has been operating at the flea market, emphasizing the market’s importance as a socio-cultural hub and breeding ground for social enterprise. The social tensions in Kviberg attracted considerable media attention both locally and nationally when it was discovered that a housing association in the area had put up barbed wire on the side facing the neighboring apartment building. This action was justified by allegations of vandalism and can be seen as a literal example of how security is created through barriers that separate not only buildings but also social classes.⁴¹

39 “Konstens frågeformulär # 58: Ola Åstrand” [Art’s Questionnaire # 58: Ola Åstrand] <http://konsten.net/konstens-frageformular-58-ola-astrand/> [accessed 11/26/2020].

40 Henrik Ekelund & Per Geijer, “Ta itu med stölderna - stäng Kvibergs marknad” [Tie Up the Loose Ends - Close Kviberg’s Market], *Göteborgs Posten (GP)*, 10/25/2019.

41 Lina Isaksson, “Taggtråd ska hålla hyresgäster borta” [Barbed Wire Installed to Keep Tenants Away], *Göteborg direkt*, 12/11/2018.



Ola Åstrand, *The Blood in Us*, 2019, Photo: Jan Peter Dahlqvist © Ola Åstrand / Bildupphovsrätt 2022

Bleeding

I'm bleeding today cause I miss my bro / My girl still mad I ain't
pick up my phone / My mama still think I ain't did nothing
wrong / But I can't say the truth, so I sing this song.⁴²

A few blocks away from the barbed wire fence, the walls of the Åstrand tunnel glow with blood-red light, at least during the dark months of the year. One wall reads “the blood in us” in LED letters. Blood is probably not something most people associate with security/safety, and the work challenges conventional notions of what it is to feel protected. Although Åstrand explains in his project description that

⁴² Meron, *Bleeding (Ft. Ahdam & Ille Freeway)*, (video), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LQmGufRy0TI>. [accessed 11/26/2020].

his intention was for passers-by to feel embedded in a (mother's) body and to be struck by "a sense of something warm and inclusive," the work's text is sufficiently vague to evoke other associations.⁴³ Moreover, there is a rawness in the blood-red lighting that makes me experience the tunnel as a barren and rather bleak place.

The significance of Åstrand's *The Blood in Us* shifted when Swedish hip-hop artist Meron chose to shoot the music video for *Bleeding* (feat. Ille Freeway & Ahdam) in the tunnel. The video intersperses fast cars, crowbars, and a partying crowd with clips of musicians Ille Freeway and Ahdam miming the song's chorus with "the blood in us" in the background. The blood-red glow from Åstrand's work reappears in other scenes, setting the tone for the music video. The video contains several references to guns and drugs but also deals with losing a close friend ("Praying for my bro, he's gone it hurts / Trying to shed tears but it feels like I am empty"). In a scene set in the tunnel, Ille Freeway stands with his head bowed and prays, only to point his hand, shaped like a gun, at his head in the following clip. In this way, the video dramatizes the simultaneously raw and emotional mood that characterizes Åstrand's work.

In this example, public safety art has reached out and been renegotiated in its encounter with the suburbs' hip-hop culture. The work's formation of a blood fellowship is linked to the group of young black men who appear in the video. In this way, the subject matter that has underpinned the project and is represented in the more generic appeal of the other light artworks is undermined. It could even be said that Åstrand's work has attracted the unsafe/insecure behavior, particularly with regard to drugs and weapons, that the municipality would have preferred to make invisible. Instead, through Meron's appropriation, a sense of security is formed based on the group identity around hip-hop and gang culture. This is subversive, but it also creates new dividing lines. For example, in the song, "my girl" and "my mama" are excluded from the fellowship of young men, reinforcing the exclusion of suburban women, a group where insecurity is high. This occurs due to a series of interpretations and cannot be blamed on Åstrand's work. However, what can be said is that by not explicitly thematizing the insecurity of this marginalized group, the artworks in *Safe, Beautiful City* enabled such an outcome. Ultimately, this criticism should not be directed

43 <http://olastrand.blogspot.com/2019/01/utsmyckning-kviberg-goteborg.html> [accessed 11/26/2020].

at the artworks themselves but at the project's initial invitation for proposals, as well as how the collected data was processed.

To call public light art racist would be an exaggeration. On the other hand, there is a reason, I believe, to examine the ideological underpinnings of the idea of light art as a security/safety measure in public spaces. Also missing from *Safe, Beautiful City* is a deeper problematization of the historical and political significance of sending artists to segregated suburbs to enlighten and beautify. Therefore, if light art is to be critically relevant, it would, I believe, require an in-depth analysis of the municipal and governmental visions to spread light and the belief that art can help to create a better future in these areas.⁴⁴ One path forward would be to think things the other way around, arguing that safety/security has less to do with lighting than with the right to darkness. The American writer Toni Morrison touches on this in the quotation from the novel *Love*, with which my analysis of light art began. She points to some of the prejudices that continue to find their way into current efforts of using light art as crime prevention and shifts the perspective so that lighting appears to be a threat. What is in danger of being lost, according to this view, is neither the safety/security of the individual nor private property but the lyrical sense of urban darkness as a safe, secure and communal space.

Another kind of security art?

In this article, I have raised several reasons to deepen and problematize public art's security/safety function, dealing with everything from terrorist threats to drug dealing and homelessness in recent decades. In the safety projects I have analyzed here, public artworks are used as interventions, while the artists have almost no say in the actual problem formulation, which in these cases has been decided at the level of local

44 The artist and researcher Monica Sand highlights this perspective on light art in her analysis of the light artwork that Alexandra Stratimirovic created in a collaboration between the City of Gothenburg and Public Art Agency Sweden within the framework of *Art is Happening*. What is missing from her account is a dialogue with those who, from decolonial and post-Marxist perspectives, have criticized the view of (European) Enlightenment as an emancipatory project. Monica Sand, *Tro, hopp och konst - konst som politiskt verktyg: forskningsrapport om Statens konstråds satsning Konst händer 2016-2018* [*Faith, Hope and Art - Art as a Political Tool: Research Report on the Public Art Agency Sweden's Initiative Art is Happening 2016-2018*] (Stockholm: ArkDes, 2019), pp. 103-113.

politics. The same can be said about the specific threats identified in these projects. In the case of light art in the tunnels, the threat was identified as darkness, as well as what the municipality of Gothenburg defined as behavior creating insecurity perpetrated by the homeless and other marginalized groups. This aligns with Listerborn, who also highlights the lack of critical perspectives as a pervasive problem in creating safer Swedish cities. As an alternative, she highlights the value of critically informed safety/security efforts that listen to, or rather are created by, minorities and other marginalized groups.⁴⁵ There are likewise good reasons to emphasize the necessity of a critical notion of security/safety in public art as well, which could result in projects that, rather than perpetuating and cementing normative ideas, can reshape what it means to feel secure. At the same time, the study shows how existing safety art has been renegotiated in the reception of the works, where works are associated with different kinds of security/safety and threats than those initially formulated by local politicians and even the artists themselves.

45 Listerborn, "Feminist Struggle Over Urban Safety and the Politics of Space," *op.cit.*