

KARI CAVÉN

A Worker's Diary

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About A Worker's Diary

The art of Kari Cavén (b. 1954) could be described as the poetry of observation. He is continuously seeking meanings in everything that surrounds us, the world of objects and the environment as a whole. The meanings often focus on the question of whether something is art or not. This question has preoccupied and inspired Cavén throughout almost his whole career as an artist. It has also been a core idea of modernism, addressed and tested from a variety of perspectives over the decades.

A viewer of Cavén's work seems to experience the same process as the artist does when he is planning and designing his pieces. Concentration and an open mind are needed for noticing meanings. The boundary of art and non-art is continuously fluid, but it can be halted for a moment to view the situation in the light of the artist's proposals or examples. After Marcel Duchamp, art has often been defined with context, which means that any object at all can be turned into art by displaying it in an art space and an art-related situation. This is not Cavén's guideline. His art, instead, focuses on the significance of the individual object. He looks for content created by chance or develops it deliberately from something unfinished within the material. The work as a whole is brought to completion with its name, i.e. with language. Looking at the works, it often seems as if they have baptised themselves.

Cavén's method of naming his works is based on a kind of trichotomy of what a piece is made of and what it looks like, what it actually is or has been, and finally the linguistic transillumination of these factors. At best, this transillumination, often marked by perceptive humour, combines all the levels of the work.

Cavén's art is based on seeking and finding. He studies the marks of time on matter and waste produced by consumption, acquiring cheap products and collecting discarded objects from dumpsters. The realisation of a piece is preceded by an extremely precise stage of selecting, during which the artist 'engages in a dialogue' with his chosen material.

The starting point, however, is always the artist's own way of observing matters, objects, actions or their traces. He truly sees and experiences things, seeks and finds, and finally adapts verbal expression to them. The verbal references are as freely chosen as Cavén's choices in style, often containing quotes from hackneyed everyday expressions or popular culture.

He translates all this into an idiom of art that is not dependent on any individual style, for different things call for methods of visual expression that are specific to them. Each style is also a narrative reflecting the history of its own time.

Cavén does not usually make a work of art according to any preconceived notion. Exceptions to this rule are public works of art for specific locations, which are often based on a predetermined idea or theme. They, too, proceed from some perceived element of the future location or situation of the work. One such work by him is *Today, Tomorrow, Forever* in the Artscape Nordland sculpture project in the municipality

of Beiarn in Norway. The materials of its pieces define time. The work consists of three circular structures; *Today* is made of cordwood, *Tomorrow* of timber, and *Forever* of concrete.

Cavén's aesthetic has a broad register. His visual expression can be earthy everyday imagery, and on the other hand aesthetic fine-tuning taken to extremes. It can be felt that art is important but it does not have to be self-important. Cavén tells us a story of which perhaps the deepest content is to see and recognise poetry in everyday life and its diverse world.

Maaretta Jaukkuri, curator of the exhibition

Kari Cavén has represented Finland in the Venice and Sao Paulo biennales and his works are included in private collections and public collections in Finland and many Nordic ones, including Modern Museet in Stockholm, the Malmö Art Museum, the Gothenburg Art Museum, the Saastamoinen Foundation/EMMA, Espoo; the Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma, Helsinki ja HAM Helsinki Art Museum. Kari Cavén has also been invited to make several public works of art in Finland, Sweden and Norway.

In recent years, Kari Cavén has, among other things, held solo exhibitions at Galeria Cavalo in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and Östfold Kunstsenter in Fredrikstad, Norway.