**Interview with Joachim Granit, Creative Director at Färgfabriken**

Symbiosis *is a multifaceted exhibition that establishes space for meetings, workshops and talks. In recent years, Färgfabriken has worked together with artists, researchers, architects and designers to investigate how the concept of symbiosis can be used as a metaphor and medium for thinking collectively about the questions that arise during this complex transition period that humanity finds itself in. Therefore,* Symbiosis *encompasses many different forms of expression. The participants have reflected on and given a voice to their own experiences and methods, but have also operated in constellations where the boundary between art and research is blurred. The intention is for all this knowledge to interact and contribute different perspectives in a single exhibition space with a variety of associated activities.*

*The exhibition is open from 28 August to 28 November 2021 in Färgfabriken’s main hall.*

**Tell us a little about how the Symbiosis project came about.**

The idea first came to us about three years ago, when large forest fires were ravaging Sweden and the global political situation was perceived as being alarmist, reactionary and protectionist. We wanted to create an exhibition that investigated alternatives – where can they be found, and how they can arise? Moreover, we wanted to investigate the concept of symbiosis – what does it mean? The opposite of symbiosis is parasitism. This is what dictates our existence today. We over consume and wear out important resources. One of the many consequences of this is global warming.

**What’s the exhibition about?**

Symbiosis is a polyphonic exhibition with many contributions from and links between different disciplines and scientific fields. The ambition is to discover and investigate connections and relationships that impact both our present and our future.

The exhibition moves between various topics, including water, landscape and our use of resources. It touches on AI but also investigates how we can build future societies, with inspiration taken from nature. A key element throughout the exhibition is the use of art to strengthen and create a dialogue between the various topics featured in Symbiosis.

Therefore, Symbiosis is an attempt to find interesting and possible – or impossible – connections between different subject areas; a discussion facilitated by Färgfabriken, with the help of many external contributions and experiences, on ways to look at the challenges we’re currently facing from different perspectives.

Symbiosis is simultaneously a meeting between different cultural expressions and an installation project where research and art have merged into hybrids.

Visitors encounter different forms of expression – art, design and architecture. It’s important to particularly point out the parts of the exhibition that represent unions between art and science. Through their different approaches and methods, different constellations have sought to find and composed stories that can give rise to perhaps seeing and interpreting the world with new eyes.

It’s an ongoing curious investigative process. And one that has just started.

The exhibition does not intend to answer the question of what exactly symbiosis is, but rather create the right conditions for the audience to gain an increased awareness themselves (we hope) of the fact that our world is intertwined with and dependent on different systems on both a small and large scale. It’s a way of trying to relate to and explore a complex existence. The answers are many, and the questions even more...

These days, we usually base our lives on existing systems and methods, which means that we miss opportunities that we haven’t yet identified. We see that there are protectionist structures that are very reluctant to change. We live in a time where different systems and ways of thinking simply need to be challenged in order to find new ways and opportunities to collaborate.

**Why the term “symbiosis”?**

Symbiosis is a term that is used relatively often these days, and we thought that it would be interesting to see how we can work with it, and examine which themes feel relevant to emphasise, and how they can provide different insights into how and in what ways the term can be used. The term also illustrates the wide range of connections and dense networks that exist between different systems in our world.

Moreover, we wanted to show that it is a potentially relevant as a replacement for the worn-out term “sustainability”. These are just some of the reasons why Färgfabriken has taken the plunge and is trying out “symbiosis” as a term.

As I said earlier, the opposite of symbiosis is parasitism, and that’s where humanity finds itself these days. We wear down fragile systems when we should be living in harmony with them.

We certainly need to examine ourselves as a species. We need to shift perspectives and focus on the things that we may not see on a daily basis. In both overall and specific contexts. We need to adopt both a macro and micro perspective that focus on various aspects of our existence.

**How have you collaborated with others, and what has this collaboration meant for the project?**

It’s impossible to put into words how important the conversations and workshops have been for developing this project. We’ve had a fantastic time, and generously been given the opportunity to participate in new experiences and knowledge. The researchers we’ve collaborated with have inspired us and, above all, helped to raise awareness of interesting and, in many cases, very advanced issues. At times, it’s been like a kind of easy “sparring”, where we tested each other’s positions and, to some extent, also challenged our respective working methods. It’s been exciting and challenging. What you take away after a process like this is a feeling that we have only just started gently testing each other and understanding each other’s different experiences. There’s so much more room to grow.

**What distinguishes Symbiosis from a thematic group exhibition?**

Symbiosis stands out in that we’ve succeeded in developing a couple of key parts in the exhibition that scientists and artists have created in collaboration. Together, they have visualised, considered and prepared theses and designs that can inspire new ways of thinking. The wide range of expressions and ideas may “clash” with each other in this mix, where art, architecture, performance – all these different forms of expression – find themselves in a symbiosis with science.

There are several layers in Symbiosis: we have the exhibition, seminars, dances and performances, workshops and discussions. We also have a continuously updated folder that is printed here at Färgfabriken, where you can view in-depth and reflective texts by the participants.

**What can visitors expect? And what do you want them to take with them from the exhibition?**

We hope that those who visit can get involved and take the time to absorb all the different levels of information and visual expression, and that they feel that they’ve visited an exploratory exhibition that is full of experiences and that has been more than just informative. That even expressions which are driven by the imagination and the senses are perceived as thought-provoking and stimulating.  And that they in turn inspires new meetings in our visitors’ lives.

Our world is complex and beautiful, despite all the gloomy images of the future we’re constantly fed. Those of us who have worked on the exhibition hope that it can inspire and rejuvenate our visitors. We look forward to finally seeing people again after a long pandemic.

**Is Symbiosis a synthesis of previous activities or a completely new way of working?**

Färgfabriken has always worked with the surrounding environment and investigated “symbioses” when we have engaged in, for example, urban planning. We’ve conducted activities in different places all around the world, often with the city as a theme. What we and all the participants see so clearly is that a city contains many different, complex relationships.And that it is precisely there – in the contexts where experience and knowledge meet – that symbioses occur between different interests and systems.

**Has anything unexpected happened during the process? New questions, unexpected images, metaphors or maybe even symbioses?**

A metaphor that became apparent for me personally is the coral reef. When I went snorkeling around the Great Barrier Reef, I saw many small and large species that, in one way or another, either parasitise each other or live in symbiosis.

As most of us know, coral reefs are endangered and may more or less disappear in the near future. There are many more examples, such as our own forests, which are also extremely vulnerable. Our commercial forestry means that a lot of species are about to become endangered. This is an example that’s close to home. Not to mention our marine environment in the troubled Baltic Sea.

Another insight that became apparent during the work with Symbiosis is the question of cities and how we live in them. The city is a melting pot, where a wide range of different individuals, groups, interests, structures and biological systems have to coexist. Resources must be allocated between people and all the biotopes that we depend on both inside and outside the city limits.

Everyone who has worked on the exhibition hopes that the public are also inspired to find their own metaphors themselves.

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