

Images of Justice: Contemporary Art in Retfærd. Nordic Journal of Law and Justice

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Abstract

Many of the texts written about the relationship between law and art have background in the perception of art that existed before the manifestation of idea based and conceptual art in the 1960s. By contrast, this paper examines how contemporary art visually portrays justice from a variety of themes and aesthetic expressions. It takes background in cover pages of a Nordic journal Retfærd. Nordic Journal of Law and Justice, which has exhibited contemporary art works since 2006. The paper discusses artworks that represent both thematic and aesthetic down strokes, to illustrate the variety in the artists' and art's engagement with law. Moreover, since all the artworks are contemporary, they illustrate issues of societal concern, not least images about the wars in the aftermath of the terror attacks on 9/11, identity formation and commerce.

It is not unusual that past examinations of the relationship between art and law have focused on pre-modern art and examined how the law could be portrayed from aesthetic considerations and interpretations. Like modernist philosophy, images of law have been conceptualised through the key aesthetic category of the sublime (Douzinas, 2000: 815, Goodrich, 1995). Yet, rather than merely being about 'the Good, the True, and the Beautiful' (Bourdieu and Haacke, 1995: 143) or the sublime, different forms of art have had different functions in society in the 19th century (Bourdieu, 1996; Panofsky and Bourdieu, 2002; Bourdieu, 1993). Since the 1960s, Western contemporary art has developed into a critical enterprise, asking other questions than about the sublime, and has thus challenged both the very concept of art and the limitations of democratic processes. Many of the texts written about the relationship between law and art have background in the perception of art that existed before the manifestation of idea based and conceptual art in the 1960s, when new forms and formats of art proliferated and took the arts field in many different directions.¹ Quoting Jean-Pierre Vernant's text about Greek Tragedy, Carol

1 There are too many texts related to the area of law and art to refer to them all. But classic examples can be found in DOUZINAS, C. 2000. The Legality of the Image. *The Modern Law Review*, 63, 813-830, BEN-DOR, O. 2011. Introduction: Standing before the gates of law? In: BEN-DOR, O. (ed.) *Law and Art: Justice, Ethics and Aesthetics*. Oxon: Routledge, DOUZINAS, C. & NEAD, L. 1999. *Law and the Image: The Authority of Art and the Aesthetics of Law*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

Becker notes about contemporary art: ‘Although it “appears rooted in social reality, that does not mean it is a reflection of it. It does not reflect that reality but calls it into question by depicting it rent, divided against itself, it turns it into a problem.”’ (Becker, 1994: xiii) Although art is developed within specific social circumstances and thus takes part in the specific struggles of dominant ideologies, it can nevertheless provide ‘an unusually powerful challenge and alternative to the dominant ideological forms, and is in that sense an eminently contradictory phenomenon.’ (Eagleton, 1990: 3) Parallel to the expansion of the public sphere and the state – partly through a process of juridification, where the law expanded to hitherto unregulated areas (Habermas, 1987) – art has also expanded its areas of societal concern through critical reflections about society. As Habermas (1987, 1984) has argued, contemporary visual arts are not only about aesthetics and the sublime but they have an emancipatory force attached to them. Law’s textual form has made it common to examine it in relation to literature, where law and literature are two common enterprises focusing on linguistic, rhetorical and narrative aspects of the law (Dworkin, 1986, Aristodemou, 2000).

In contrast to the main part of the literature about law and art and law and literature, this paper focuses on contemporary images of justice as they are represented in *Retfærd*. In order to examine contemporary visual art’s engagement with the law, this paper asks: How are images of justice represented in contemporary artworks covering the front pages of *Retfærd*. *Nordic Journal of Law and Justice*?

The article proceeds, as follows. After a short description of the background of the artworks chosen for this article, the second section discusses artworks that reflect on the law in relation to conditions of war in Afghanistan and how the war has impacted on Western law. The following sections examine, firstly, covers that focus on law and commerce and then law and identity. The article ends with a short conclusion.

Background

In 2006 *Retfærd*. *Nordic Journal of Law and Justice* began to present contemporary art of younger primarily Nordic artists on the cover. At the same time it got a new and minimalistic layout so the full potential of the artworks could be explored.² The artists were invited to choose one of their works dealing with legal or political issues and they were asked to present their work and artistic practice in a one-page article. The decision to use contemporary artworks on the cover was taken at a Nordic editorial board meeting

2 *Retfærd* is accessible on www.retfaerd.org with a two year delay.

in Copenhagen in 2005. The decision was taken in order to stress the critical and interdisciplinary purpose of the journal, and to have alternative reflections, perspectives and representations of the law seen through the visual arts.

In 1976 *Retfærd. Nordic Journal of Law and Justice* was established as a Marxist legal journal to assist the struggles of the working classes against capitalism. In 1996 it left its socialist background and transformed into a non-ideological, yet critical, legal journal. The profile of the journal is stressed on the journal-webpage:

‘The works published in *Retfærd* analyse the law from a theoretical and practical point of view on the basis of not only jurisprudence, but also sociology, criminology, political science, history, philosophy, economics, ecology, anthropology, feminism and other sciences. The journal therefore contributes to the interdisciplinarity of legal scholarship in a way that not only unveils relations of dominance in the law, but also focuses on critical legal science as an emancipatory endeavor. For these reasons, *Retfærd* publishes articles that examine law in broader context and challenge prevailing views on the law.’ (www.retfaerd.org)

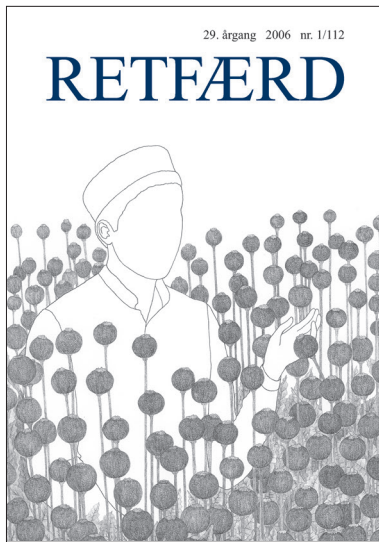
I have chosen to review the artists, whose artworks have featured on the covers of *Retfærd* in the period from issue 1/112, 2006 to issue 2/141, 2013. With four issues a year, I ‘curated’ 30 volumes.³ Almost all the artists I invited accepted to deliver an artwork, even though we did not have the possibility to pay honorarium. During the first two years, *Retfærd* only had funding for black and white printing (with one exception), but from 2008 it could reproduce the covers in colour. The artworks represent a broad diversity of expression, approaches and themes. Most of the works are made by young Nordic artists, several of whom have exhibited at the Venice Biennale, but also artists from outside the Nordic countries have delivered works.

The artworks chosen as illustrations for this paper are selected from the issues I ‘curated’. They are not representative for all the covers. They are, however, examples of thematic and visual variations of artists’ relation to law.

3 During 2006-2009 I was the editor-in-chief of the Danish editorial board and in 2009-2013 I was the Nordic editor-in chief.

Poetic aesthetics vs. law, war and commerce

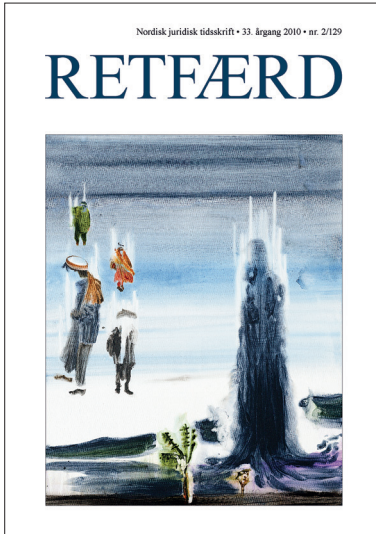
In different ways, a number of the artworks on the covers of *Retfærd* discuss the war in Afghanistan and reflect on how the war is related to global trade, legal changes in the West and morality. Both Maria Finn's and John Kørner's works are subtle discussions of the background and consequences of the war in Afghanistan and play on poetic expressions.



The artwork that launched the new cover layout of *Retfærd* was the Swedish artist Maria Finn's *Poppy Power (Afghanistan)*. It is a black-and-white drawing of a person standing alone in a poppy field. The poppy field is drawn in explicit detail, while the person only appears in contour.

The work continues Finn's series of *Vita teckningar* (White drawings) which stress the sociological point that surroundings affect our identity and living conditions. The work is thus in accordance with Montesquieu's thesis from *In the Spirit of the Law*, in which he argues that social and geographical factors determine the development of different forms of law in different societies

(Montesquieu, 2000 (1748)). The *Retfærd*-work is a poetic and symbolic comment on what happened in Afghanistan after the US increased the efforts in Iraq and even initiated the war against the Iraqi regime. According to Finn (2006), when the US decided to go to war in Iraq in 2003, the media attention changed from being on Afghanistan to merely being on Iraq. As a consequence it became more difficult to obtain international funding for the reconstruction of Afghanistan. Moreover, because of a decrease in US surveillance of areas in Afghanistan that could be used as poppy fields, it became easier to produce poppies. These new conditions gave profitable ways of living – especially for middlemen and distributors, but also for Afghan poppy farmers. Finn's drawing does not show the war, yet the anonymous person surrounded by poppies points our attention to global mechanisms of trade and crime with producers, middlemen, distributors and drug abuse. Moreover, it focuses on how international politics have latent and manifest global consequences for local living conditions, both in the states in focus and in the dominating states involved in determining international policies and transnational export of governance. The cover reminds the viewer that the existing exportation of law and state institutions that support democracy, human rights and the rule of law is of limited success if it is not based in the *lifeworlds* of and supported by the people it affects.



In *Christian ved foden af bjerget* (*Christian at the foot of the mountain*) the Danish artist John Kørner discusses the loss of soldiers' and Afghans' lives in the war in Afghanistan. The work is a part of a series of paintings about soldiers that Kørner began with the first loss of a Danish soldier. He paints a work in the name of each fallen Danish soldier. The series symbolises the human tragedy when a young soldier returns home in a coffin, just as it symbolises the death of the Afghans. The work is a comment on the war and on the Danish participation in the war, demanding acknowledgement of the fact that Danish soldiers took active part in the battles. Referring

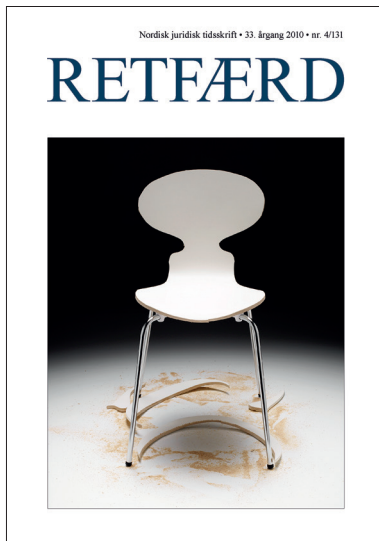
in the title to Moses and the Israelis camping at the foot of Mount Sinai in Exodus, also reflected in the cloud and bushes surrounding the mountain, the work also symbolises the exodus of fallen soldiers to another place. In addition, reference is made to the Ten Commandments inscribed on the two stone tablets God gave Moses. By pointing to the fundament of civilisation with the explicit reference to Mount Sinai, where Moses got the Commandments, Kørner thus manages, in a understated way, to discuss the most uncivilised ways of solving conflicts in the modern world, namely by war. He relates the war to the ethical guidelines of life and to the fundament in most criminal codes. However, the painting also questions Danish Christian background and appreciated values, which partly are the reasons for the war: In order to stabilise and secure the West against 'evil', it is necessary to fight the evil with warfare. As such the Western hegemony is built on double standards. The artwork also questions the global consequences of warfare. The war in Afghanistan constituted a new type of war, where the enemy was a diffuse network and not a specific nation with soldiers (in a recognisable uniform). Suddenly, it was extremely difficult, if not impossible, to recognise the enemy, which was not limited to Afghanistan but had cells all over the world. The West itself could be hit by the network, by 'the other'. The West used a Weberian value-rational reasoning (Weber, 1978), based on undisputable arguments as if they were coming from God, to justify the implementation of new regulation giving the state the right to monitor, arrest and expel even its own citizens who did not materially conform to the standards of a higher justice coming from the Commandments.

Kørner's work also puts the journal title *Retfærd* and the concept of it in perspective. The title *Retfærd* plays on the word *retfærdighed* (justice) and could be translated to 'just

expedition’ or ‘just journey’. Was the war in Afghanistan a just journey and did the soldiers and ordinary people die because of a higher journey of justice?

Law and commerce

Another general topic that has been taken up by the artists in *Retfærd* is how law engages with commerce.



In its works on economy, the Danish artists’ group Superflex, reflects on democratic ways of production and governance. In the work *Copy Right* on the cover of *Retfærd* nr. 4/131 from 2010, a replica of Arne Jacobsen’s famous chair ‘Myren’ (The Ant) from 1953 is modified in order to correct and make it more similar to the original Jacobsen design. The replica has been produced so it comes as close as possible in design to the original Jacobsen chair without violating copyright rules. Superflex changed the replica so it came to look even more like the original chair, transforming the legitimate replica into an illegal copy. With the transformation of the chair, Superflex discusses the arbitrariness and limitation of the copyright rules and the rules of intellectual property rights in contemporary society. The chair is Superflex’ response to the censoring of their work *Guaraná Power*, which was planned for the Sao Paulo biennale in 2006. The work comments on power and commercial hierarchies in global capitalism.



The work *Danish Passport* by the Danish artist Jens Haaning presents his own passport placed in a glass frame as an artwork. Like in many of his other works, such as *Super Discount*, *Trade Bartering* and *Light Bulb Exchange*, Haaning transforms an ordinary item into an art object. The transformation comments on the concept of

art as well as decontextualizing the document by placing it in a new context and transposing its meaning and function (Haaning, 2003). With a new context, the object transforms its legal status without changing form and material. This is also true for migration of citizens. When citizens migrate, their legal and social status transforms, which is symbolised by the passport. The passport is the modern symbol of nationality and citizenship, and it is thus nationality and citizenship that become valuable possessions. The passport becomes one of a number of goods that can be bought and sold on the global market. Yet, the value of the passport will differ according to the issuing country, just as the value of nationality differs. The passport is an explicit symbol of mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. Within the EU, at the same time as we have seen a harmonisation and liberalisation of rules about traveling, work and social benefits, as well as weakened border control for European citizens, we have experienced a strengthening of rules and a stronger border control in relation to citizens from outside the EU.

Law, identity and social space

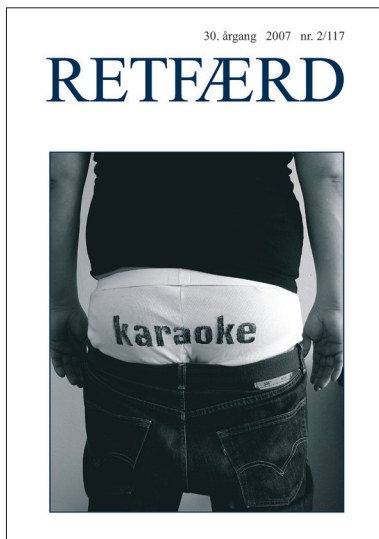
The next series of chosen covers consider questions of how law affects our identity and social space and how identity and social space is formed through national and international structures of law, politics and commerce.



The work *Spændetrojen – 'rigsfællesskabspause'* (*Straitjacket – Danish Commonwealth-lull*) by the Greenlandic artist Julie Edel Hardenberg is a straitjacket of the Greenlandic flag on a hanger. It examines the expectations of 'the individual' of two countries – Denmark and Greenland – and the difficulties creating a national identity when living on the periphery of the Commonwealth. The countries use different forms of mechanisms to create different national identities, which affect the individual's identity. In the artwork the individual manages to step out of the pressure, which is symbolised by the fact that the straitjacket is left on the hanger. Yet, the work also stresses how the Danish state violates

Greenlandic culture and society in order to modernize it through law. Through modern legal reforms Danish ways of living, housing and organizing society have been exported

to Greenland and have suppressed local customs.⁴ New forms of law, legal institutions and processes of modernization in society mean that the Greenlandic population lives in-between two cultures and is having to adhere to different forms of governance or in a kind of pluralistic system, with different (legal) cultures working closely together. Many of the legal acts in Greenland have been written in Denmark by Danish jurists with limited expertise in Greenlandic culture and conditions, as explored by Danish legal sociologists, Hanne Petersen (2006) as well as Verner Goldschmidt and Agnete Weis Bentzon (Goldschmidt et al., 1950). Goldschmidt and Bentzon examined informal norms in Greenland with the purpose of modernizing the legal system in the then Danish colony. They examined factors determining the judgments of the official decision-making authorities in Greenland, and found that social pressure and local cultures, which were not always in accordance with the imported Danish regulation, had an impact on the local decision-makers.

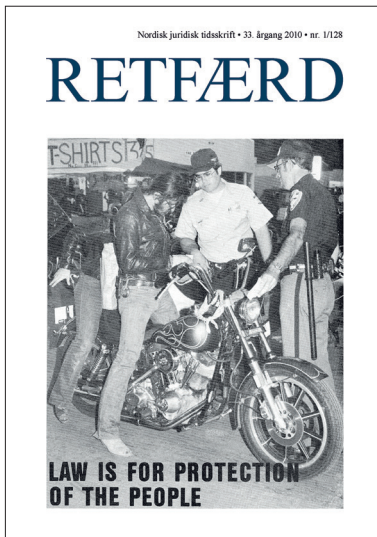


Without being as explicatory as Hardenberg, the Icelandic artist Arnfinnur Amazeen has some of the same concerns in his work *I'm not really making it, the feeling that I'm faking it – and other worries about coming from an unfashionably comfortable background* covering *Retfærd* no. 117/2007. His work touches upon identity processes in the then rather wealthy Island. In the work he discusses how it is possible to import street-subcultures from the US, as they are represented through rap-music on MTV, to Icelandic youth culture. The work asks if it is possible to transform identity and culture as a young person through buying expensive items and clothing, and wearing them in accordance

with US street-subculture fashion, for example by wearing pants 'prison-style' like the rappers on MTV, even if (at the end of the day) you are a white middle-class Icelandic. The work points to global cultural supremacy that forms the visions and ideals for local cultures far away from the commercialised subculture centres. Even through the visions and ideals of the subcultures question the established rules, authorities and ideas of the perfect society, they merely end up being in a form of light protest. The word *Karaoke*

4 See also the special issue on Greenland in *Retfærd. Nordic Journal of Law and Justice* no. 16, vol. 4, 1981.

written on the back of the highly visible boxer shorts symbolises a performance form that has been associated predominantly with working and lower middle class cultures in the west (Drew, 2005: 374). The performance form was invented in Japan and used in business meetings and was an extension of older drinking and singing rituals. In Japan, it was the business class who first practised karaoke, and it has been argued, that in Asian societies imitation is a 'necessary phase in the acquisition of many valued cultural skills.' (Drew, 2005: 378) Karaoke is a mimetic activity, where a pre-existing activity is transformed into something different from itself. It ends up, as Amazeen notes, as 'a form of entertainment in which an amateur singer or singers sing along with recorded music. The music is typically of a well-known song in which the voice of the original singer is absent or reduced in volume.' (Amazeen, 2007) Thus, it can be argued that Amazeen also refers to the discussion about legal transplants and their translation into adapting legal cultures (Watson, 1974, Legrand, 1997). As Amazeen notes with the music, the original system of the law and the social structures around the law can be seen as absent in the importing country, where the field of power and legal cultures are different, making it very difficult to implement foreign law and legal institutions (Dezalay and Garth, 2002, Gardner, 1980, Hammerslev, 2010).



The Norwegian artist Gardar Eide Einarsson's work has the text 'Law is for the protection of the people', which is also the title of the work, written on a picture of policemen, guards or other authority persons who have stopped a motorbike rider. The motorbike, most likely a Harley Davidson, with its classic high positioned handlebar, and the persons riding the motorbike, in their jeans and leatherjackets, symbolise the ultimate freedom as it has been represented in American films such as 'Easy Rider' and by the motorbike clubs. By contrast, the persons of authority, with their batons, symbolise the boundaries of the freedom of the people. The contrast between the text and the fact that

authorities limit the freedom of specific persons is striking and reminds us of Magritte's *Ceci n'est pas une pipe*, which Foucault (1998) examines. The work addresses, like other of Einarsson's works, how societal institutions and authorities interfere with different notions of freedom of subcultures. His work discusses how dominant cultures border parallel systems and that the borderline is negotiated through different strategies of inclusion and

exclusion. At the same time, the title of the artwork refers to a Kris Kristofferson song from the 1970 album *Kristofferson*:

Billy Dalton staggered on the sidewalk
 Someone said, he stumbled and he fell
 Six squad cars came screamin' to the rescue
 Hauled old Billy Dalton off to jail

'Cause the law is for protection of the people
 Rules are rules and any fool can see
 We don't need no drunks like Billy Dalton
 Scarin' decent folks like you and me, no siree

Homer Lee Hunnicut was nothin' but a hippy
 Walkin' through this world without a care
 Then one day, six strappin' brave policeman
 Held down Homer Lee and cut his hair

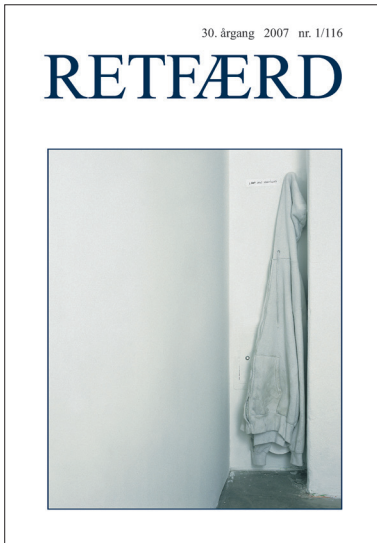
'Cause the law is for protection of the people
 Rules are rules and any fool can see
 We don't need no hairy headed hippies
 Scarin' decent folks like you and me, no siree

Oh, so thank your lucky stars, you've got protection
 Walk the line and never mind the cost
 And don't wonder who them lawmen was protectin'
 When they nailed the Savior to the cross

'Cause the law is for protection of the people
 Rules are rules and any fool can see
 We don't need no riddle speakin' prophets
 Scarin' decent folks like you and me, no siree

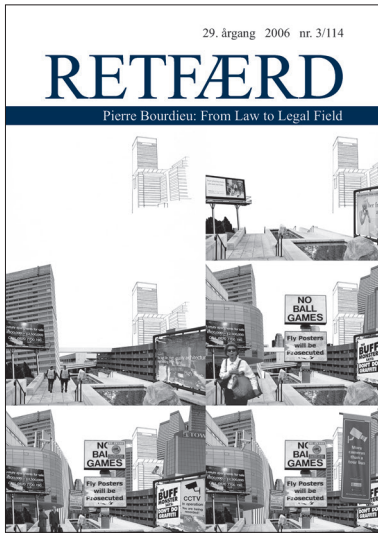
Like Einarsson's work, the song plays on one of the dilemmas of the law, namely that the protection of some people limits the freedom of others. Most often it is the dominant culture that is protected against other cultures. This touches upon one of the classic dilemmas of the law, which has been discussed in legal philosophy, perhaps most clearly by Hobbes (2009/1651) and Locke (1988/1689), in their discussions about how

freedom of men has been limited (in different ways) in order to get protection of the sovereign. Sociology of law has also shown that dominant groups can harmonise visions and ideas, dominant cultures and dominant forms of capital through the law, statistics and common currency (Bourdieu, 1998, Bourdieu, 2005, Arnholtz and Hammerslev, 2013). By representing the ‘outlaws’ through some of the most iconic symbols of freedom in modern American pop culture, the artwork stresses this dilemma.



In his ‘Laws are straight’ Henrik Olesen plays on the same theme, but he is also addressing concerns related to sexuality. The work is a photo of a subtle sculpture consisting of a dirty hooded sweatshirt hanging in a niche in the wall accompanied by a small note with a handwritten text saying ‘Laws are straight’. The work challenges the dominating iconographies of how legislation and social structures form identities and the representation of them. As Olesen (2007) notes in *Retfærd* ‘My projects have ranged over an area between art and politics, and have examined the representation of minorities within the demographic societal structure: how does legislation characterize certain social groupings

and what are the consequences of these heterosexual, normative power structures?’ The work puts focus on how social structures and societal institutions govern and regulate individuality by asking how and for whom rules are written. Thus, Olesen also questions issues of social structures, their (re)production in relation to dominating groups and minority groups. Again, the empty ‘hoody’ symbolises the marginalised and the criminal and how we – in social space – hide socially marginalised persons in a corner, so we cannot see them and therefore forget their existence. Whereas the sticker text ‘Laws are straight’ points to the fact that legislation and other social rules define and legitimise normal heterosexual white non-poor behaviour (whatever that is), the corner could point to the old Marxist observation (see Hammerslev and Mathiesen, 2013), that law is created to reproduce social structures that benefit the dominating groups. This observation is also in accordance with feminist studies and studies on same-sex marriages, which attempt to highlight dominant structures that reproduce specific forms of the ‘normal’ way of living. Such studies (see, for example, Smart, 1995, Bridgeman and Millns, 1998) repeatedly show how the law manages to repress women, gay people, Afro-Americans etc. through its universal language.



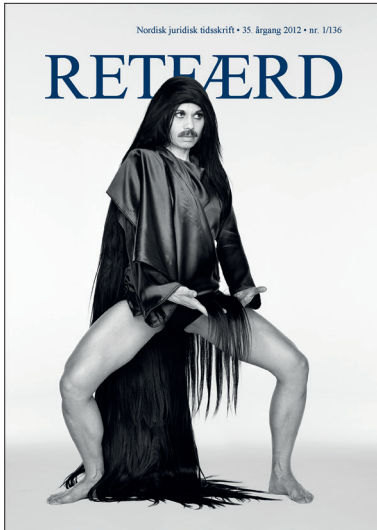
The work ‘Spaced Out?’ by the Danish artist Jakob Kolding, which was on a special issue of *Retfærd* concerning *Pierre Bourdieu: From Law to Legal Field*, consists of a series of billboards that are gradually filled with elements from what the artist calls ‘gentrified office/living areas which by now exist in most western cities.’ (Kolding 1996, 116).⁵ It is a comment to the old industrial areas with old buildings and slum which now transform into expensive living areas and offices. It indicates a change in divisions of labour and thus also in power relations in new areas of the global cities. Like Saskia Sassen’s study of the Global City (Sassen, 2001), the work points to the new global ways of domination by using

physical and social control, new ways of organising and defining power and specific legitimate identities and cultures in public space – a public space that is related to urban planning, politics, economy and ideology. As Kolding notes, ‘Areas increasingly regulated architecturally, commercially and legally. Luxury apartments, offices, commercials, security guards, business men and women, surveillance cameras and strict rules forbidding loitering, skateboarding, ball games, graffiti etc.’ (ibid) Kolding’s artwork engages in the discussions of how city planning forms city spaces that do not favour subcultures, marginalised persons or, more radically, the *lifeworlds* of the citizens. New city areas attract persons with resources; whereas persons with limited resources are ousted from the cities. Kolding was chosen for the special issue on Bourdieu on law because he implicitly seems to draw on the work of Bourdieu and his findings about how social classes are reproduced (Bourdieu, 1999). With his eye on social space and its creation and impact on social life, Kolding shows how investments and regulation in urban spaces affect the way social life can be organised and reproduced.

Similar to the works of Einarsson and Olesen, Kolding’s work touches on how law and public space are related and have an impact on the conditions and possibilities of identity formation and how it is possible to live within the law through the different identities.

5 The work was originally done as a series of 14 large scale public billboards in Vienna. On the last billboard the Joker from Batman gambles for the city with a machine gun in his hand. It refers to Gotham City and its corrupt and criminal inhabitants.

With the new areas of the global city, the room for the marginalised, the homeless and subgroups become limited because of strict rules of conduct.



Lilabeth Cuenca Rasmussen works primarily with the performance art, including composed music, songs and visual elements, for example, specifically designed costumes, to explore a variety of issues such as gender, identity, socio-cultural relations, inclusion and exclusion. The work Rasmussen chose for *Retfærd, Afghan Hound*, is a photo from a performance that includes four stories of impersonations of characters from Afghanistan made for the Danish Pavilion at the Venice Biennale 2011, which addressed the theme of freedom of expression. After the controversy of the Muhammad cartoons, freedom of expression became once again a topical issue. It became relevant to examine the borders of freedom of

expression. Which issues are relevant to take into account when deciding the limits of freedom of expression and who should decide where the boundaries are? In *Afghan Hound* Rasmussen addresses the complexities of gender in a Masculine Afghan culture, where sexuality and women are repressed but at the same time develop new constructions of gender and identity. These gender constructions appear and transform through the four stories in *Afghan Hound* narrated through dance, music and song with a costume made out of hair as the repetitive visual element. The costume is inspired by Afghan Hound dog racing and the transformation of genders and identities happens through the use of this costume. The first song quotes the Afghan activist, writer and politician in exile, *Malalai Joya*. The second story concerns a young boy trained to act as a girl, a *Bacha Bazi*, who dances at men's parties and is also a sex slave. The third story relates to masculine authority with a powerful voice. The last character mirrors a former girl raised as a boy in certain families with no sons, a *Bacha Posb*. *Afghan Hound* brings to the fore repressed voices and communicates Afghan tradition and culture by challenging stereotypical Western discourses on the Arabic World.⁶ The work can thus be seen as a reification of Western images of the queer and non-heteronormative in contrast to the misogynist and anti-sex Afghan East. In that sense, Cuenca Rasmussen's work follows the agenda of Santos (Santos and Rodríguez-Garavito, 2005, Santos, 2002) who in his research tries to

6 The performance can be seen at <http://vimeo.com/33152137>.

give voice to repressed and voiceless groups in the third world. Santos argues that legal export from the west to the periphery is deemed to be relatively unsuccessful so long as local cultures and conditions are not taken into consideration.

New images of Justice?

The artworks chosen for this article juxtaposing visual arts and law may seem critical of the law, since none of the images illustrate more positive impacts law have had on societal development. They engage critically in the surrounding society through critical questions and have thus developed the focus (and form) of art from being merely concerned with the sublime. The artworks reflect on legal transplants, on how law affects identity and how law is related to global commerce. Even though the images discuss important, topical issues, and therefore question the concept and function of law, they are merely exploring the issues and maintain focus on the morality and (double) standards behind our actions, without giving answers. In that sense they use their critical potential to keep reminding us of the consequences of our practices, governance and law. This stance to law can also be found in philosophy (of law) and sociology (of law) that also engage with 'law and society' issues, but often do not give any prescriptions to the way society should be organised and deal with its problems. The *Retferd*-artworks illustrate how new and diverse contemporary art forms, mirrors and discusses topical legal and political issues seen in a global context, in particular, where political and social action in one part of the world has consequences in other parts of the world in terms of elements such as identity, commerce, legislation and politics.

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