



The four channel video installation *Ön / Island* investigates an area between the city and the iron ore mines of Kiruna. Located in the very north of Sweden – 180 km beyond the arctic circle – the place has since the 16th century been a projection site for mystical nature, endless wealth due to the ore findings and enormous industrial productivity. The large scale mining excavation and the founding of the city, first started when the railway arrived around the turn to the 20th century and has accelerated since the 1950ties, when the mine went underground. Today, the excavation takes place at a depth up to 1364 m, resulting in cracks and deformations on the surface. Some areas closest to the mine have already collapsed, the cracks moving towards the city with 7 cm each day. Almost half of the city's dwellings will have to be moved within the next 25 years, one of the biggest city transformations in Europe. The former industrial and residential area *Ön* was torn down already in the 1970ties due to ground deformations and is today located on the edge of the collapsing zone, locked behind a spacious security fence. Nature has taken over and only traces of roads and building fundaments are visible between the cracks and craters on the ground.

The four monitors of the video installation show unsynchronized loops: In the upper row a remote controlled miniature airship equipped with a camera is navigated over the restricted area, casually documenting the situation. In the lower row a remote controlled excavator is working 1000 m underground in the mining shafts with his operator in the control center above ground. A voice-over text recapitulates the becoming of the place and discuss the insuperable distance between the individual and the mining industry. Georgius Agricola's writings from 1556 are quoted to get closer to the true nature of iron.

ÖN / ISLAND

Ingo Vetter 2011/12



ÖN / ISLAND



Compilation of a four channel video installation
Ingo Vetter 2011/12

ÖN / ISLAND

A video installation by Ingo Vetter
for the research and exhibition
project Kirunatopia

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Ingo Vetter
Speaker Catriona Shaw
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Sound editing Killian Schwoon

Postproduction at University
for the Arts Bremen
Produced by Goethe-Institut
Sweden 2011/12

Thank you to the Municipality of
Kiruna and LKAB

Technical specifications
4 unsynchronized loops for media
player, MOV_h264-files PAL
1 loop with stereo audio,
3 loops without sound
max. length 10:09 min



ÖN / ISLAND

This place has a name:

Industriområdet – a site for industrial purpose – divided into three zones: deformation, crack and collapse; a fence separating the former residential areas away from the dangers of moving ground.

The older names from the early days of the mine and the city are:

Tippen – the dump
Stalludden – the stable beak
Djävönsön – devils island

And ancient names telling ancient stories:

Kirunavaara – the mountain of the white grouse
Loussajärvi – the salmon lake
Haukivaara – the pike mountain

The devils island – or simply Ön – is beside the lake, not in it. On the other side of the peat bog, shadowed by the ore mountain and disconnected from the town – in perdition. The lake and bog were drained, the island transformed into an important hub for distribution: Goods and ore and timber and ore and people and ore.

Pioneers!

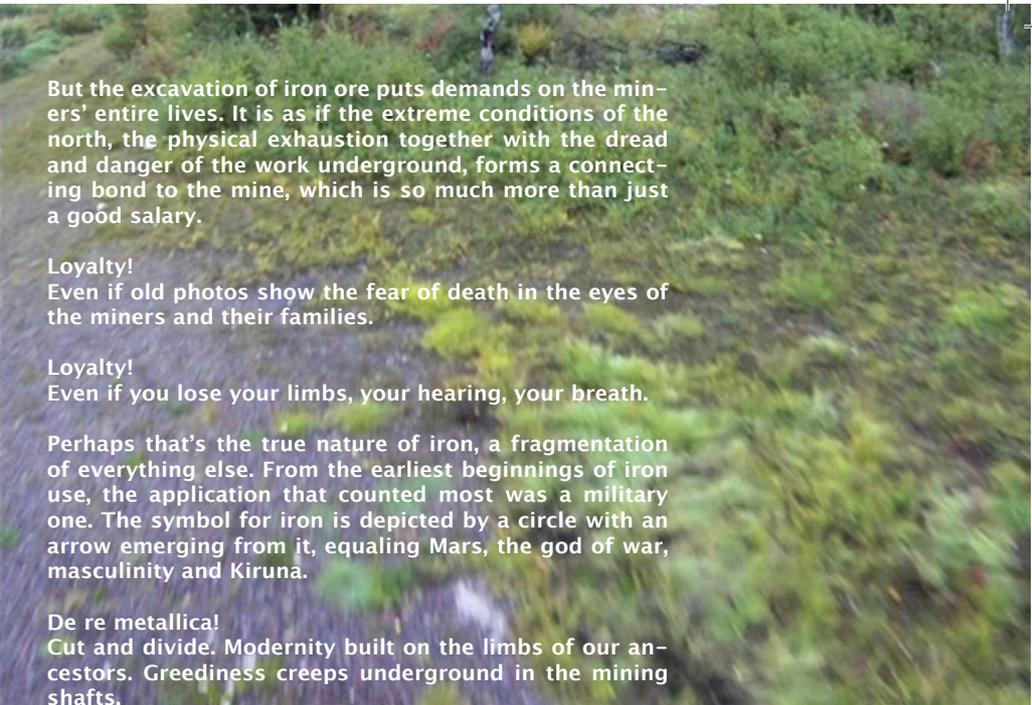
Houses were built, families raised, memories constructed.

Still an island, cut off from the mainland.

The mine went underground, cracks appearing on the surface, relentlessly moving closer to the city. Ön was the first affected area, inhabitants forced to leave, all buildings vanishing from the ground. All that is lost physically, increases in size mentally; posthumously, the evanesced Ön became the homestead of the city.

The Sami knew that revealing the iron mountain would cause the loss of their freedom. One divulging the findings, taking the reward. Generations of reindeer herders followed; trading ore transports against flour, tobacco and currency. Then the railway arrived, with the first load of ore taken to the coast, already exceeding the annual reindeer transport. Increased productivity demanded labor force, constant and insatiable. Many more came to the north, feeding the mine, founding the city.

Pioneers!



But the excavation of iron ore puts demands on the miners' entire lives. It is as if the extreme conditions of the north, the physical exhaustion together with the dread and danger of the work underground, forms a connecting bond to the mine, which is so much more than just a good salary.

Loyalty!

Even if old photos show the fear of death in the eyes of the miners and their families.

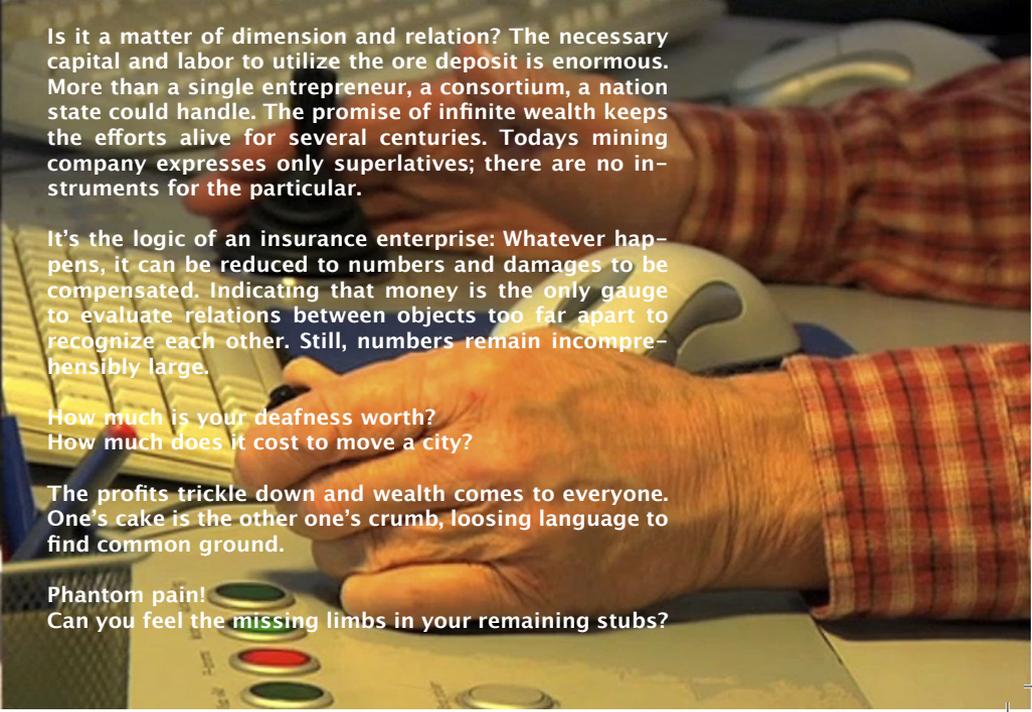
Loyalty!

Even if you lose your limbs, your hearing, your breath.

Perhaps that's the true nature of iron, a fragmentation of everything else. From the earliest beginnings of iron use, the application that counted most was a military one. The symbol for iron is depicted by a circle with an arrow emerging from it, equaling Mars, the god of war, masculinity and Kiruna.

De re metallica!

Cut and divide. Modernity built on the limbs of our ancestors. Greediness creeps underground in the mining shafts.



Is it a matter of dimension and relation? The necessary capital and labor to utilize the ore deposit is enormous. More than a single entrepreneur, a consortium, a nation state could handle. The promise of infinite wealth keeps the efforts alive for several centuries. Today's mining company expresses only superlatives; there are no instruments for the particular.

It's the logic of an insurance enterprise: Whatever happens, it can be reduced to numbers and damages to be compensated. Indicating that money is the only gauge to evaluate relations between objects too far apart to recognize each other. Still, numbers remain incomprehensibly large.

How much is your deafness worth?

How much does it cost to move a city?

The profits trickle down and wealth comes to everyone. One's cake is the other one's crumb, losing language to find common ground.

Phantom pain!

Can you feel the missing limbs in your remaining stubs?