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Abstract

The Danish assembling magazine ta’ BOX can be seen as a continuation of the Danish magazine ta’ (1967–1968). It consisted of transparent plastic bags, which constituted an open-ended and un-edited frame for the widely heterogeneous content. In many ways ta’ BOX responded to the ongoing transformation of the aesthetic field and the youth movement and student revolt of 1968, by trying to break down the barriers between the elevated and rarefied fine arts, on the one hand, and ordinary, everyday life on the other. In principle, the editorial structure allowed everybody to participate. However, the contributors were almost exclusively from Danish avant-garde circles or those active within the youth and student revolt movements.

The Danish assembling magazine ta’ BOX can be regarded as a continuation of the Danish magazine ta’ (1967–1968), but also as a profound change of direction. As was announced in the last editorial of ta’ (no. 8, 1968), the magazine was to be continued in ta’ BOX (1969–1970), as “a far more open, far more flexible magazine”. The struggle against the high–low dichotomy was radicalized in this new assembling magazine, which was published the following year, consisting of transparent plastic bags, which constituted an open-ended, un-edited frame for the submitted and widely heterogeneous material. Undoubtedly the youth movement and student revolt of 1968 played a major part in this shift. The ongoing transformation of the aesthetic field had resulted in harsh criticism of the arts, which were accused of being supportive and uncritical of the dominant capitalist society. In many ways ta’BOX responded to this criticism by trying to break down the barriers between the elevated and rarefied fine arts, on the one hand, and ordinary, everyday life, on the other. In principle, the non-hierarchic structure allowed everybody to participate. However, the contributors were almost exclusively from Danish avant-garde circles or were among those active in the youth and student revolt movements. The dissolution of the trans-aesthetic environment of ta’ meant that ta’ BOX was primarily linked to the visual artists from the former ta’ group (Peter Louis-Jensen, Bjørn Nørgaard and Per Kirkeby), whereas the literary influence was concentrated in the little magazine MAK (1969–1970), where the talented
young writers Per Højholt and Svend Åge Madsen, who had not been members of the ta’ group but were loosely affiliated to it, became part of the editorial board together with the publisher Claus Clausen, the politician Ebbe Kløvedal Reich and the literary critic Steffen Hejlskov Larsen.

*ta’BOX* provided the conditions for a broadening of the concept of art, an undermining of the boundaries between art and everyday life. In contrast to its predecessor, *ta’BOX* contained no manifestos or collective statements, but it can nevertheless be regarded as a collective statement because of the way it was organised. It was a decentralised, anti-bureaucratic and anti-hierarchical demythologisation of the artist and the art work, but although attempts were made to include contributions from people outside the art world and the Ex-School group it remained within the sphere of art.

Five issues of *ta’BOX* were published (nos. 1, 2, 2½, 3 and 4), in 1969–1970, with 250 copies being produced of each issue. Originally *ta’BOX* was going to be published by h. m. bergs forlag, but the inclusion of a cannabis cookie in the first issue of the magazine was too much for the publisher Berg, and after some discussion in the press *ta’BOX* was published by Panel 13, the composer Henning Christiansen’s (very) small press, which had published artists’ books by Hans-Jørgen Nielsen, Per Kirkeby and the composer himself in 1965.

Numbers 1–4 of *ta’BOX* appeared in transparent plastic bags, which were sent to subscribers as well as being sold individually, whereas no. 2½ was sent solely to subscribers, in a brown envelope the same size as the plastic bag (34 × 25 cm, the size of an A4 page). Unlike a traditional flat, bound publication, this format allowed not only poems and pictures but also three-dimensional objects to appear in *ta’BOX*.

The deconstruction of the traditional stable publication format in *ta’BOX* was anticipated in the catalogue to the exhibition *Anonymiteter* (Anonymities) at Lunds Konsthall in Sweden in 1968 by the Experimental School of Art – an exhibition that in retrospect must be regarded as the culmination of not only Danish, but Scandinavian, minimal art as a whole. *ta’BOX* also had affinities with internationally more recognised assembling magazines (Perkins 1996) such as the German *Omnibus News* (1969), the Canadian *Notebook* (1969–1970) and Richard Kostelanetz et al.’s American *Assembling* (1970–1987; Kostelanetz 1978). *ta’BOX* is

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1 *Omnibus News* only appeared in a single issue consisting of 200 pages, compiled by Thomas Niggl, Christian d’Orville and Heimrad Prem. The magazine contained contributions in German and English by 117 contributors from eight different countries.

2 *Notebook* was compiled by Dana Atchley in 1969–1970. Atchley compiled material from 69 contributors.