

CURATING ELECTRICITY BOXES

By curator Lotte Juul Petersen

From a logical point of view an electricity box serve its citizens with electricity. However, the box has far more diversifying sets of meanings in the city, which you may not think of in your daily life routine when passing by a box. By observing closely the boxes in the streets, people use them actually for different creative, environmental or social purposes. Some people use them for placing posters, stickers and tags directly on them, even though it is illegal in most cities, people want to use them actively for visuals statements and cultural advisements for the public. Other people place empty coffee cups on the boxes or hide read newspapers behind the boxes or other rubbish is left. In that way, people do not want to throw their rubbish directly on the street. And moreover, you can even see people using the electricity boxes as a social space. In the need of a break during the day they sit directly on the boxes. By reflecting on these different self/collective organization in relation to electricity boxes, it is an object, which is far more active than first conceived as solely a practical devise.

Thus, on the one-hand the concept of 'Urban pedestals' derives from this fascinating observation that the public is actively using the electricity boxes in the streets, which twists the original function. On the second-hand the concept derives from the observation, that the boxes have more or less the size of an actual pedestal. However, the spatial context is not an institutional or a monumental one with the purpose to increase the status of the sculpture, which the term pedestal generally is applied to the support of a statue. On the contrary, it is an urban context in where a pedestal on street level is placed. 'Urban pedestals' as a curatorial concept seeks to open for challenging new ways of producing art specific for the pedestal in an urban context. With this in mind the title 'Urban pedestals' came about. The title 'Urban pedestals' reflect conceptually on modernism and how the pedestal is conceived today. Instead of reciting critical theory, which has sought to demolish the modernistic and classical pedestal for the last decades, the idea behind 'Urban pedestals' has been to explore the possibilities of a pedestal in the urban context with a positive constructive energy. With the artistic and curatorial energy 'Urban pedestals' questions how can you activate and work with this small-scale setting as an urban pedestal?

'Urban pedestals' is therefore questioning on a conceptual level thoughts on art production and how contemporary art is exhibited by opening this curatorial setting. The concept seeks to intervene on a minimal setting and re-negotiate the public space with subtle experiences as an act compared to a ready-made. The modification of the electricity box may lead to it being designated as a "modified", "interpreted" or "adapted" production. A ready-made is a designation of found object in new constellations. The context into which it is placed is also a highly relevant factor. The idea of dignifying commonplace objects in this way was originally a shocking challenge to the accepted distinction between what was considered art as opposed to not art. 'Urban Pedestals' refer indirectly the concept of a ready-made, but still it twists the notion. 'Urban pedestals' is not combining found objects showing them in art institutions in order to have a discussion on what is art or not. However, 'Urban pedestals' expands the notion of art production by combining an art piece to the electricity box in an urban space, which has reenact how a ready-made is confusing the viewer's experience. 'Urban pedestals' will hopefully create a public reflection on other possible experience through using the electricity box as a setting. Maybe people will look at the electricity boxes, being used by 'Urban pedestals', as art. But what matter is really how the different works can affect the public and redirect their senses from a daily routine. Defining the first 'Urban pedestals' to a site and an electricity box the concept shall be seen as a subtle and humorous critique of public art interventions by playing with this twisted institutional reference such as the pedestal. 'Urban Pedestals' is therefore placing itself in the urban space with an ambiguous blend between an institutional setting and a public intervention.

'Urban pedestals' is a curatorial and artistic act related to an electricity box in a specific, urban context with a mobile potential to be realized elsewhere. 'Urban pedestals' has a mobile potential as a concept meaning that 'Urban pedestals' will be realized in other cities where the concept could be explored and integrated in the local context. Taking this concrete possibility into account the first 'Urban pedestals' will be realized via different invited international artists in the street Nørre Voldgade of Copenhagen. In Nørre Voldgade you find the most concentrated rows of electricity boxes in Copenhagen. The street is an alley next to H.C. Ørstedsparken, which is actively used 24 hours. Starting from Nørreport Station, which is one of the most hectic junctions in the city, you can place yourself with the back to the station and look directly through the alley to the Danish Art Agency. The street is a traffic transit or place for car parking. To park your car and obtain parking ticket is often how you act in the space. Thus by setting Urban pedestals free in this area the idea is to redirect the use of the space and give a possibility of experiencing the space differently.