

FRIEZE, November – December 2005  
Review by Staffan Boije af Gennäs

*Andersen's, Copenhagen, Denmark*

Through the window of the newly opened Copenhagen gallery Andersen's a row of intricately folded paper lamps could be seen hanging from the ceiling. These classic models, by the design company Le Klint, have been a staple of Danish interiors for decades, coming back into fashion about every 15 years.

Inside, the story of the lamps was expressed in various ways, which could have been bewildering for anyone familiar with Pia Rönicke's previous works, which are based on investigations into urban planning and the influence suburban architecture has on its occupants (*Storyboard for a City*, 2000, or *A Place Like Any Other*, 2001, for example). I have always thought Rönicke treats architectural environments the way Cindy Sherman treats her depicted subjects: opening up, in some iconoclastic sense, a fissure between their imagined and their actual appearance.

With this exhibition, however, Rönicke left her earlier tanglings with representation behind in order to tell a more specific story. The slide projection in the main room of the gallery (part of the overall installation entitled *Uden et Navn*, Without a Name, 2005), told it with the help of small white plastic capital letters on a black background, like the ones used to list the names of the occupants in apartment buildings. Each frame contained a sentence. The story was that of a woman named Le Klint, and how, as a teenager, had her name and lamp designs appropriated by her greedy relatives; how today the Danish lamp company of the same name is big business; and how the only

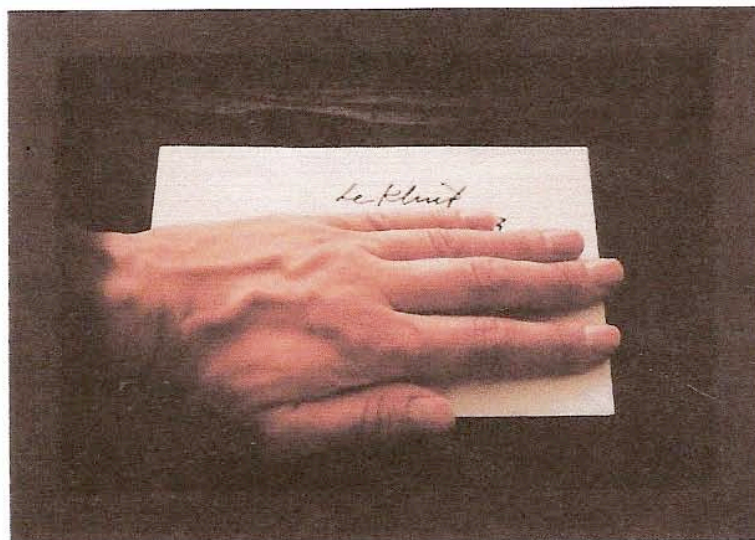
thing she got out of it is 100 Euros a month and a copy of a contract her father once forced her to sign – a document handing over the rights to use her name as a brand name. It is a true story. But the way it is told – including small details such as omitting any punctuation from the text, and the slow pace of the slide projector – is as captivating as the story itself.

However, after watching the projection for about ten minutes or so, a small question arose: wouldn't these slides have sufficed without most of the other elements in the exhibition? Admittedly, the lamps hanging from the ceiling, folded by the artist according to Le Klint's instructions, elucidate the slides. But the inclusion of photographs of Le Klint and the lamps she produced later in her life, and the half-finished paper versions on a table, didn't really add anything. In a separate room were two video projections: on one screen a series of the lamps were turned on and off whilst the other depicted rain at night caught in stroboscopic light. But with the poetic voice-over was too pronouncedly emotional, the script too mellifluous.

But leaving the overworked elements aside, the armchair I sat in to watch the slides proffered another narrative. Le Klint had seen a previous incarnation of the show in Paris at GB Agency a year earlier and asked Rönicke if she could include the chair in this show. It had been designed by one of her uncles, a member of the family who hadn't tried to steal her name from her. Placed in the gallery, it was the manifestation of an intriguingly elaborate set of narrative turns.

**Staffan Boije af Gennäs**

Pia Rönicke  
*Uden et Navn*  
(Without a Name)  
(detail)  
2005  
Colour slide



Pia Rönicke