

THE SCI ARS PROJECT (A)

About a year and a half after the idea was originally conceived, SCI ARS was expected to become a center for contemporary art, with specific focus on cross-disciplinary research centered on artistic processes. The results would be published in traditional research outlets and also in the form of art exhibitions. Although research about artistic processes was still in its infancy, it was envisioned SCI ARS would offer an arena for the fusion of research in fields such as creativity, cognition, medicine, computer sciences, and entrepreneurship. To date, it was argued, there existed no dedicated space to produce and display the scientific findings, partially in the form of art exhibitions. SCI ARS was to become that dedicated space.

The conditions looked promising. The city of Uppsala, located some 70 kilometers north of Stockholm, in many respects was dominated by the university's presence, stretching back to the late 15th century. The city comprised a set of well-established and internationally reputed research institutions, including the faculties of medicine, natural sciences, and humanities. It nevertheless, or perhaps because of this, lacked any significant institutions for contemporary art. Talks aimed at the creation of new cultural institutions had been going on for decades, but by and large had remained unfruitful. The project itself had received some early seed funding from the Foundation of the Culture of the Future, and financing issues could be addressed through support from Anders Wall, a well-known Swedish entrepreneur, philanthropist, and art collector and patron. It was also his network of contacts that had revealed that the owners of a now empty warehouse facility - Senapsfabriken ("The Mustard Factory") - were looking for new tenants. Members of the project group had extensive knowledge about the workings of the art and cultural arena, maintained local and international networks of contacts in contemporary art circles, and one of the members was involved in original academic research in the intersection of art and entrepreneurship.

The project developed over a period of eighteen months. During that period, it saw the formulation of an overarching vision as well as a detailed program for planned activities (contained in what essentially translates into a full-blown business plan), developed through contacts with artists, curators, architects, local art museums, potential financiers, and representatives of Uppsala University. For the first years of operation, financing was to be sought from private individuals and corporations, with Uppsala University as an important supporting partner from the scientific community.

The Meeting at Uppsala University

The team behind the SCI ARS project were currently preparing for a meeting with representatives of Uppsala University. The representatives included the Vice-Chancellor, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, a tenured professor who was the university's advisor on cultural matters, and the Vice-Chancellor's assistant.

The meeting had been preceded by extensive preparations, including a range of meetings with potential financiers, architects, and potential providers of exhibition premises. At a pre-meeting, the business plan had been discussed with the central financier, and these discussions had uncovered international contacts on the contemporary art scene that could be of further help in venture financing. In all probability, contacts between the critical financier and the university Vice-Chancellor had created a pre-understanding of the venture and thus prepared the ground for the upcoming meeting. As the project would be asking for formal rather than financial support from the university, it was believed that the issues under consideration were comparatively non-contentious.