

Creative language
cafe at Fisksätra
museum & book
release:
*Tales from the
Kitchen Table*

(November/ December
2020)

Tales from the Kitchen Table

Introduction

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, many of us are spending much of our time at home: working, sleeping, socialising, eating at home. The kitchen has long been ‘the hub of the home’ in many homes all over the world; a place for sharing food and stories; a place for gossip; a place, hidden from the public eye, where we can be completely ourselves and posit political views we might not feel safe sharing outside of the home. In Fisksätra in particular, the kitchen has been the site of municipal injustice, with many apartments being ‘renovated’ with poor quality IKEA kitchens in order to increase rents and ultimately push people out of their homes. But now the global pandemic has, in a sense, radicalised the space of the kitchen, made it a place where everything and nothing happens.

Fisksätra museum itself also participates in this model of sharing domestic space: housed in a ground floor two-room apartment within a block typical of the area’s architecture, with immediate access to the neighbourhood’s main public square, it inhabits the threshold between private and public space. One enters the museum through the kitchen, thus as visitors we immediately feel at home, projecting ourselves back into our own kitchens elsewhere. The museum kitchen is an imprint of our own homes, thus the ideal place for telling intimate stories in public, for sharing and creating empathy.



1. Book cover.
Illustration by Matilda Tucker.

2. Posters

Creative Language Café

Come along to chat, write, be creative (and have a fika!) with us at Fisksättra Museum.

Fridays 13.00-14.30: Everyone welcome

Saturdays 13.14.30: Women's group

Contact Cristina on 073 986 91 74 to sign up!

FISKSÄTRA MUSEUM (Fisksättra torg 13)

* All of this will take place in a coronavirus-safe environment.

Kreativt språkcafé på Fisksättra Museum

Kom och prata tillsammans! Vi skriver, skapar bilder och fikar på Fisksättra Museum.

Fredagar 13.00-14.30: Lördagar 13.00-14.30:

Kontakta Cristina på 073 986 91 74 för att anmäla dig!

FISKSÄTRA MUSEUM (Fisksättra torg 13)

* Allt detta sker givetvis på ett säkert och Covidanpassat sätt.

مقهى اللغة الإبداعية

الجميع مدعوون إلى التحدث و الكتابة والتعبير الإبداعي (والفكا!) معنا في متحف فيسكاترا

يوم الجمعة من الساعة 13-14:30

يوم السبت من الساعة 13-14:30

أفلا وسهلاً!

اتصلوا بكريستينا ب 0739869174 من أجل التسجيل

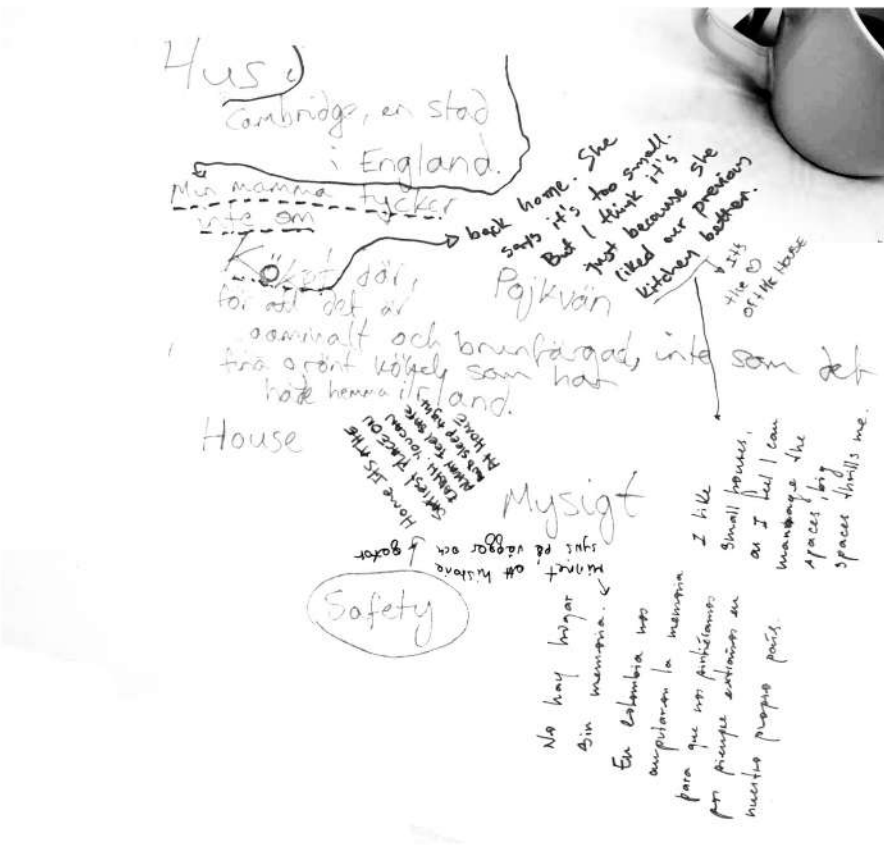
FISKSÄTRA MUSEUM (Fisksättra torg 13)

* المقهى سيقام في بيئة آمنة ومنع من فيروس كورونا

It is this sense of being 'here and elsewhere' that has guided us in our navigation of these liminal spaces, asking ourselves again and again: How to inhabit a place that we are not physically in?

'Here and elsewhere' can mean that your kitchen table has now become your workplace; that the daily Zoom calls with your colleagues afford you new insights into their private lives, as you catch pixelated glimpses of their own kitchen table from which they now work. 'Here and elsewhere' means hearing from loved ones experiencing lockdown in Karachi, New York, Lima, or Cairo, while we sit in Sweden, a country which decided to face the onslaught of the pandemic with a uniquely loose approach to restriction measures. It also means hearing about political and social struggles in those 'elsewheres' in a time when it has become impossible to travel to those places.

3. Language Cafe at Fisksättra museum. Collective writing on the tablecloth.



We were particularly interested in making dwelling places out of borders, thresholds, especially in those instances when we are forced into those positions by necessity and circumstance. As a group of individuals from a wide geographical and temporal range of different 'here and elsewheres', we are all complex containers of languages and knowledge. How could we explore that fragmentation and those ruptures?

We approached these questions through experiments in collective writing, listening, and fictioning on the one hand, and by building physical dwelling places — a dollhouse inspired by Fisksättra's highrises and a corona-safe makeshift shelter for holding workshop sessions— on the other. Most of all, we wanted to tell stories, and create new ones together.

4. Posters.

Café de Idiomas Creativo

Únete para conversar o escribir de manera libre y creativa (con Fika) en Fisksåtra Museum.

Viernes de 13.00-14.30:
Sábado de 13.00-14.30:

Bienvenidas todas las
Contactar a Cristina para inscribirse al: 0739869174.

FISKSÅTRA MUSEUM (Fisksåtra torg 13)

* Se respetarán las medidas de seguridad covid en todo momento.

Café des langues et d'écriture créative

Venez nombreux discuter, écrire, dessiner (et prendre un thé) avec nous au Fisksåtra Museum.

vendredi 13.00-14.30:
samedi 13.00-14.30:

Contactez Cristina au 073 986 91 74 pour vous inscrire!

FISKSÅTRA MUSEUM (Fisksåtra torg 13)

* Tout cela se déroulera de manière sûre et en accordance avec les restrictions mises en place par les services de santé publique.

So this is what we tried to do. In bi-weekly sessions over the course of six weeks, we sat around the kitchen table together, using the framework of the language café (språkcafé in Swedish), a space commonly provided by local organisations for new immigrants and refugees to practice their Swedish in an informal, low-pressure environment over 'fika'.

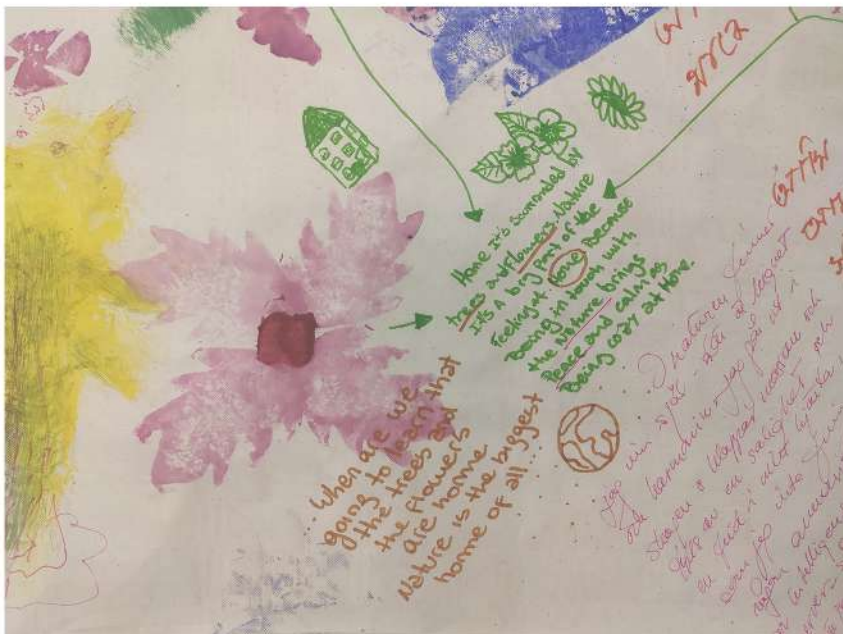
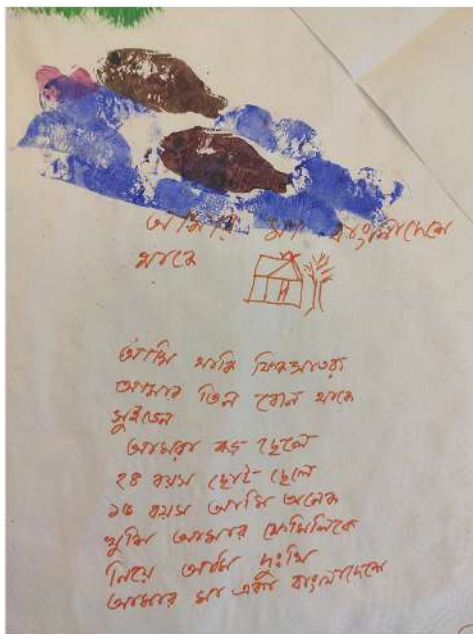
Taking the general concept of the språkcafé, we reinvented it in a decolonial context by inverting its only rule—that we must write and speak in Swedish—so that instead of being yet another mechanism on the road to becoming more Swedish, a language café could be a tool for experimenting collectively with the richness and multiplicity of languages and knowledge present in the room, with 'svenskaspråket' as one expressive option amongst many. Themes were various, ranging from memories of home and definitions of a neighbourhood, to love stories and childhood dreams, but we always came back to this shared sense of being 'here and elsewhere'.

Freshly baked bread
in the mornings
The heart remains in the longing
of having frukost med min mamma
In those long thanksgiving dinners
Home is where Andrea is
No matter where life takes us
Berlin
Jerusalem
New York
Fisksåtra
Music brings us together
El flaco
Charly
Yo quiero

Wolverme tau loco
welcome home.

5. Writing and drawing on the tablecloth.

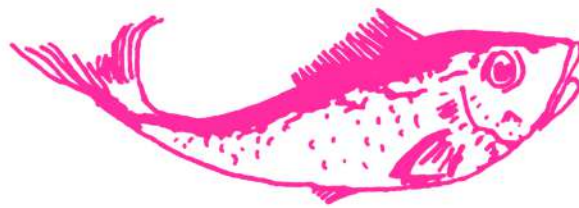
Not only words, but also everyday items in the kitchen can be used as tools for empathy and storytelling. Activities such as cooking and eating together facilitate the sharing of stories, alleviating the pressure of sitting down and narrating by engaging in something together. Even peeling potatoes side by side at the table can create intimate moments of collective agency and empathy. In the museum kitchen, those very same potatoes became printer's blocks, carving out images and a space for sharing. Potato printing is the simplest of techniques, whereby everyone, whatever their age or level of expertise, can create something, can tell a story. Further, the roughness of the prints in this technique leaves space for each person to see their own interpretation of the form - the same splotchy shape could be a cat's nose, an umbrella, or a giant's toe.



6. Vegetable printing and collective writing.

But how to be together physically in the time of corona? To accommodate the intensified virus restrictions from the Swedish government and to make physically-distanced workshop sessions possible as the weather grew colder, we constructed a heated shelter from waxed tablecloth. We took advantage of the museum's architecture for the placement of the shelter and the backdrop for the workshops, placing our shelter on the threshold of the museum entrance, a transitory space between private and public, with one foot in the kitchen and the other in the neighbourhood's main square. One foot here, one foot elsewhere, and a step closer, we hope, to understanding one another in the liminality we share there, telling stories to help us better care.

7. *Fish*. Illustration For the back cover of the book. Created by Matilda Tucker.



8. Shelter at the museum's threshold.



9. Writing about kitchen tables. Excerpt from the book.

On Sundays, the whole family gathers around in my grandmother's house
in Carapachay, Buenos Aires

My aunts and uncles
My cousins, my grandmothers and their sisters
my mom
and a few neighbours

My abuela Itali, Italia was her name
She would cook for hours for all of us
knead the pasta
and prepare the tomato sauce
in a huge boiling pot

We weren't supposed to eat until we were sitting
at the living table
but I was six

and my grandma would smile at me
and secretly
put a piece of bread in the pot
and give it to me
like a loving present

*

There's a lot of old white wood. The tiny square gas stove's flame flickers under the metal espresso maker. Letters in colourful magnets spell out our names on the fridge. It's an old east Berlin neighbourhood, but this is the early 2000s. Our table is small and square, with a yellow and orange chequered tablecloth. It occurs to me that that kitchen had a lot of square elements in it. Sitting at that table, looking at that hypnotic tablecloth pattern, I have a dark blue ceramic bowl with cereal in front of me. The bowl has white dots. Like every morning, my mother wants me to eat a sliced sour kiwi. I stare at the tablecloth. In East Germany, the kitchen table at home was the only place you could speak critically about the regime. Sometimes my mother tells me about it.



10. Collective writing on the tablecloth.

