



# ***Inland Empire***



**CHRISTIANS SANDS  
KUNSTFORENING**



# Inland Empire

Contemporary Art Exhibition at the  
International Church Music Festival 2008  
Curated by Aage Langhelle



**CHRISTIANS SANDS  
KUNSTFORENING**

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# INLAND EMPIRE

Pathos, passion and empathy – if used without a thick layer of irony – have been unusual commodities in contemporary art for a long time. Instead, the cool and distant attitude was selling best. But this is no matter of course anymore. Used as an artistic strategy, pathos is back.

For more than two thousand years, pathos was a desirable method to fascinate the public. The dream factory always knew how to use pathos for everything it could be used for. Contemporary art often develops new expressions that include well-known ingredients. The term conceptual pathos is on the tip of the tongue. An intense dialogue with an (art) historical reverberation from romanticism, expressionism and conceptual art. An open, discursive space in which the encounter of academical meta art and highly subjective narration is assuming shape.

Pathos is often set against rationality, used as an expression for the irrational. Such a polarization between rational and irrational, between intellect and feelings, is usually known by the orthodox medicine. Also contemporary art was characterized by the belief in the apparently rational.

Methods and analyses strongly inspired by other humanistic subjects and natural sciences were often used. Maybe a bit too uncritical? Despite all existing opinions about this, only few contemporary artists broke with that tradition so far. Only now some artists slowly move into the dark and hidden corners of the mind, searching for connections beyond any linear rationality – into territory where the outer and inner landscapes flow together. The outlines of some responses might be found in the exhibition *Inland Empire*<sup>1</sup>.

*Aage Langhelle, Curator*

<sup>1</sup> *Inland Empire* is the title of a movie by David Lynch. It's also the name for a rural area between two densely populated regions in California.



## **Sincere conceptual art – a contradiction?**

The very language of conceptual art – is that compatible with the idea of the romantic art project, which is to express sincerity? The traditional aim is the expression of your inner life by means of an artistic medium – can this world and the world of conceptualism merge into one? To be able to give an answer of sorts to the questions posed, I feel that some precisions are urgently needed. I then refer both to what is here meant by conceptual art as well as to the matter of what it actually *means* to express your inner life.

### **Post-conceptual**

The expression conceptual art is today much used but what meanings do the words really convey? In 2006 in Oslo the writers organisation Kritikerlaget staged a debate at the bar Mono and their theme was the new conceptualism. One of the participants was the artist, curator and museum director Jonas Ekeberg. In his column in the Morgenbladet weekly paper he had defined three Norwegian artists as Neoconceptualists. These artists were Mathias Falbakken, Gardar Eide Einarson and Marius Engh. In this debate Ekeberg augmented for a lingustical clean up. Conceptual art is, according to Ekeberg, an historical and concluded art movement, exactly the same way as impressionism is an historical and concluded movement. Artists who today work closely up to what could be labelled conceptual art ought then, once again according to Ekeberg, to be called Neoconceptualists.

However, this would only refer to a limited number of artists. Because a lot of artists today work using an artistic language which is influenced by conceptual art, but are not necessarily faithful to a conceptual idea of what art ought to be. Ekeberg suggests calling these artists Postconceptualists. A postconceptualist is not limited to the traditional media of fine arts, be it painting, graphics, drawing or sculpture, but he also uses other media, such as photography, video, photographic filming, internet and installations. These artists also work *without* a media, in projects, performance or through so called relational aesthetics. If you are to follow Ekeberg suggestions for categorisation postconceptual art will then be a more accurately coined term than conceptual art.

In Norway postconceptual art had its big breakthrough in the early nineties. It is fair to interpret this as an echo of sorts of what was happening in the United States in 1960, more or less, when conceptual art was one of several movements who ended up by finally merging fully into the art institution. The institution itself had, up until then, mainly been concerned with traditional techniques. Other "isms" to be found besides conceptualism were pop-art, fluxus and minimalism. All of these four currents were influenced by the great avant-garde movements from the epoch between the two world wars: surrealism, futurism and dadaism. Apart from the fact that the avant-garde movements used new techniques and media, they also has new and very unconventional views on what art is or what it ought to be, for that matter. The idea behind the expressionistic thoughts of fine arts, an idea that had had prominence throughout both the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup>

century was - by and large - abandoned. It was substituted for an idea stating that art should relate itself more directly to society. Art ought to have a critical function, without passing through the detour of the artists individuality. With expression I here mean that the artist is using a media for expressing his inner life.

## **Expression**

It is usual to believe that the expressionistic is particularly attached to a *craft*. The inner life of the artist happens inside the body of the artist but the hands are an extension of this body. When expressionistic painting was emerging, for instance in the form the way we associate it with Edvard Munch and Vincent van Gogh, it became evident that it especially were the formal aspects of painting, colour, brush techniques and perspectives, which should be seen as carriers of the expression itself. "The content" of a painting, assuming that it can be successfully isolated, was not in any way what was important. When Munch, to give an example here, paints starry nights in Åsgårdsstrand in the summer of 1893, it is not the components, like the evening star, the mirror of the sea, the sky, the crown of the trees or a wooden fence that make the image Munch-like. Rather, it is the particular way Munch has formed each and every one of these elements in relation to each other. Thinking of the formal aspects what might be especially striking is the way he has conducted the brush, meaning here the way the paint is put upon the canvas. What is important here is that the painter holds the brush with his hands and that the brushes are direct imprints of the artist movements. This is how the cult of the hand held originated. With

van Gogh this is most evident in his late paintings. In a museum, now more than a hundred years after his death, the spectator might experience a sensation of dizziness looking at the madness, or wildness if you please, in the brush strokes. There is a truth in these brush strokes that can not be constructed nor falsified. It is the same way truth manifests itself in a face, making visible the traces of life lived. Thus the shape of a face and the strokes of the brushes are not referring to a content but are direct imprints of life lived.

### **Pains of the heart**

If we mix the avant-garde movements of the inter war years with the avant-garde movement of the post war years we might say that they voice a vehement opposition to the cult of the handheld. For instance Marcel Duchamp's concept *The Readymade* is, among several things, also a critique of this cult of the handheld. Duchamp made it clear that the readymade should be mass manufactured as well as machine made, leaving no trace of the human hand. Futurism also idealized what was machine-like. This worshipping was meant to be a contrast to all sorts of sentimentality, a defiance to people idolatrising the old ways and regarding the modern age as a threat. Likewise, pop-art and other American movements of the early sixties were in opposition to the then dominant theory of abstract expressionism. The seminal art critic Clement Greenberg had pointed toward Jackson Pollock when one was looking for the important artist of the era. What was considered especially striking with Pollock was the honesty in the brush strokes, at times he even threw the paint directly at the paintings. When

Andy Warhol appeared with his images, which can be understood as fetishist cult of the mass produced and inauthentic official painting, a visible rupture with expressionistic tradition arose. That the opposition against expressionism also was alive and well in Norway when the postconceptualists made it to stardom in the early nineties this excerpt from a catalogue text by Åsmund Thorkildsen proves beyond any doubt. Thorkildsen were among the central theoreticians, those who defined and explained postconceptual art to a Norwegian audience. It was based on post modern philosophy. Here Thorkildsen describes the paintings of the artist Geir Harald Samuelsen:

**They (the paintings) form part of a marginal investigation of an isolated part of the resources of the painting. The paintings achieve their zest by being un-expressive. They are completely detached from the expressionistic quest for identity, strung out between the artist's soul drama and the seismic impact of the conduction of the brush<sup>1</sup>**

Another important theoretic of the nineties. Jon Ove Steighaug, expresses himself this way inn a different catalogue, published for the graduation exhibition of Bergen Fine Arts academy 2005:

**...that's why students of fine art have to, without mercy, be instructed to forget the automatic idea of romantic art mythology concerning heart and pain all that about expressing yourself. They have to orient themselves towards reality, it is absolutely necessary to dismantle the longing**

**for something else than the constant materialistic yoke we live under, it is vital to stop believing in “the magic touch” of the hand made craft, the touch, the personal....**

These two quotes are not extremes, in any way. They ought to be considered representative for the way of thinking dominant among the postconceptual artists who had their big breakthrough in the nineties.

### **Emo conceptualism**

However, today we write 2008, and for the last years we have seen a resurgence in Norway, and possibly internationally, for young artists to define their art without any explicit opposition to the idea of expressing your interior. Maybe the opposite is true, human inner life has turned into an explicit theme. This exhibition, who has received the fitting name Inland Empire, is an attempt to gather some of these artists and to give the phenomenon a gestalt. At the same time, these artists have gotten their education thorough the postconceptual tradition and few of them have turned back to those forms art used in times it was more on the whole orientated towards the inner life, The result is that they then use a post conceptual language, who have emerged in opposition to expression theory, to expressive aims. This movement, if so to be called, has been called experimentally emo conceptualism or conceptual pathos.

Where is the eventual contradiction between the post-conceptual artistic language and the expressionistic? The Danish philosopher and existentialist Søren Kirkegaard makes a description of something he calls different stages in a human life. These stages are not something

occurring successively, in phases, but are more to be understood as different strategies to be chosen in life. He names the esthetical, the ethical and the religious stage. An important point here is that Kirkegaard means that these are not compatible. You may not be both an aesthete and at the same time a religious. Kierkegaard also discusses different psychological conditions, for instance anxiety, irony and sincerity. Again: you may not be both sincere and ironic at the same time, he states. This may be linked to question of openness versus closure. What is sincere demands the utmost openness, while the ironic on the other hand demands concivement: what you mean to say has to be camouflaged, it will appear indirectly.

### **The ex-presions of the body**

The Austrian psychiatric and philosopher Wilhelm Reich has not written ha great deal about art, but some of what he has written seems relevant for this particular problem. In the chapter “The Expressive Language Of The Living” from his book *Character Analysis* he writes this:

**It is from the plasmatic emotions of the chest that most emotional expressive movements of the hands and arms originate. These limbs are, biophysically speaking, extensions of the chest segment. In the artist who is capable of freely developing his longings, the emotion of the chest is directly extended into identical expressive movements of the arms and hands. This is true for the violinist and pianist as well as the painter.**

According to Reich spontaneous movements of the body are born when impulses from the interior of the organism freely are able to move out to the periphery of the body, for example in a warm smile. Reich states that emotions *are* this very movement. The warm smile does not refer to the sensation of joy; rather the smile is the completing of the feeling of joy. In this way the term “expression” has a very concise meaning for Reich. An expression happens when a movement is pushed out, “ex-” means out in Latin, from the more central parts of the body towards the periphery. However, unfortunately it is so for most people who suffer the oppressions of societies of our type, feelings are withheld to a larger or smaller degree. To withhold the bodily expression is, once again according to Reich, an amputation of the feeling itself. A warm smile emerges then as a somewhat twisted smile. From this perspective the artists form a minority, the ones who are able to express what most people cannot, the ones who express this emotional drive through an artistic media, not just bodily. Some people may be inclined to see the Reichian perspective as somewhat reductive. If art only is concerned with expressing emotions something will be lost. However, this problem can be turned around, saying that Reich’s concept is only reductive if you have a limited concept of what emotions are. For Reich the mental life, and at the deepest level also consciousness itself, is a form of emotions.

To claim that the postconceptual and the desire for authentic art are opposing to one another shouldn’t appear as shocking claim, not to anyone really. However, when considered more deeply the matter turns out to be not

so simple after all. Andy Warhol, who can be considered a postconceptualist idol, made art that to an extreme degree was devoid of any desire whatsoever to be authentic. He wanted to express surface rather than depth; he preferred what was staged to what was honest. This attitude is called decadence. But decadence derives a lot of its power from the audacity that lies in denying the truth of what is authentic. There is a blasphemy of sorts in the decadent. At the most profound level this points to the tragic implications when you are deprived of any possibility for authentic expression. It is towards this background figures like Andy Warhol take on a heroic aura. In stead of limping on through life in a quest for an unattainable authenticity, he chooses the opposite path, he dedicates himself completely to what is staged and superficial.

*Tore Kierulf Næss*

<sup>1</sup> Standard images, Catalogue published in connection with a Fine Arts exhibition Hennie-Onstad Kunstsenter, Høvik, 2004.



*Uria III*

# ROALD ANDERSEN D.Y.

## Torsos

At first glance, Roald Andersen's ceramic torsos depict a high level of recognition. Here, for many people, the physical is an expression for man and the male. At a closer look, the torsos step forward into the room with a strong presence and a high level of tactile experience. Something awkward is revealed by skewerings, whip marks, injuries, wounds, rough surfaces and ashlike, charred parts. Wounds and injuries are traces of violent acts and tell a story about pain. Based on casting molds of the upper part of his own body, Andersen is exposing the sculptures for violence during the work process. This happens either by active operations such as shooting with a harpoon, skewering with a spear, producing holes with a drill etc. Otherwise he provides a basis for coincidences – especially by experimenting with temperature and positioning when the torsos burn in the fire. By this he creates contrasts between soft and rough surfaces, different glazes, bodyshape and injuries. Thus a tension between the beautiful and the hideous emerges. In European cultural history torsos were a frequently used expression over two thousand years. A form that artists are returning to in numerous contexts. A torso is often used as symbol for an esthetic ideal from the past. Some of Andersen's torsos dispose continuous patterns of perforation which give an impression of burned armors after a big battle. Thus a more archaic and epic dimension is added to the immediate physical discomfort. Moreover, Andersen was dealing with several religious aspects



*Uria III*

during the process. The shoulder angles suggest that the casting was made in a crucifixion pose, and a rather systematic use of a religious number symbolism – represented by the amount of skewerings – is applied to some of the torsos.

*Karl Olav Segrov Mortensen, Art Historian*



*Uria I*

# VERONICA BROVALL

## Babbling along on the sudden destruction

The confrontation with Veronica Brovall's sculptures is immediate. These imposing works are dominating, tangible and recognisable. Although none of us has ever actually seen such a creature (it hovers between a machine, a plant, something anthropomorphic, or a chance combination of all of them), it is as if we had always known something like this could exist, rooted deep in our subconscious in a mythical past or future, or after some incredible disaster has taken place. Once the sculpture has found its place in our surroundings, it does all it can to slip into our everyday reality. Its expansive volumes oblige the viewer to walk around them and to tolerate their presence. Our inquiring gaze glances off the compact – and often black – mass so that from a distance we have to be content with the overall outline. All the materials used are references to our familiar everyday reality: PVC foam, plastic film, chicken wire, nylon thread, tape, feathers and ventilators. Above all, we know that the disaster took place before we arrived. What we are looking at is the residual vibration and smouldering, and their reshaping into a new reality.

We imagine something colossal, with a brute force that lashes out without restraint and whose only outlet is to implode or to defy the cosmic workings of fate. It is above all a blind energy that drives its own life-force back towards death. Its exterior form may be robust, but the excess energy seems to come from inside. However



*Cut Through View.* Wood, metal, adhesive tape, plastic foil, black feathers, 4 ventilators, transparent tape, PVC pipes, steel wire, chicken wire, board, thread, dimmer, inner tubes, rubber. 220 x 117 x 65 cm, 2007. Photo: Bernd Borchhardt.

efficiently the plastic film attracts the gaze and sends it back where it came from, this makes the question of the innards even more intriguing. Here and there, a part of the casing that has been torn open reveals something of the uprooted underside. Other parts of the original sculpture (insofar as our imagination thinks it can deduce its form from this combination of fragments) consist of no more than disintegrated innards. From close up, we see a landscape of details that reveal what vessel of opposing forces held this colossus in an unstable equilibrium. The subterranean energies can be explained on the basis of subconscious sexual urges and the death wish, but equally of the primitive evolutionary instinct found in everything that lives, the ubiquitous energy of nature or simply the overall conditioning of the cosmos.

The way the sculptures are presented suggests a time that babbles slowly onwards, which is only emphasised by the scattered presence of feathers and ventilators. Nevertheless, everything indicates that decomposition has been doing its work and that we are actually witness to the afterlife of this anthropomorphic thing. We can imagine the complete tree, car or sucking man with their full life-force. Everything suggests that a stillness comparable to the present one had previously showed on the surface of the sculpture and that one or other sudden catastrophe had taken place, a consequence of its own recklessness, an unpredictable natural event or the clash of centrifugal forces within. This turning point reintroduced the transience of time to a colossus that had imagined itself superior to it. Whether it be the speed of car tyres or the eternal growth of trees (both are recurrent



*Freeway collage* 115 x 83 cm. 2007.  
Courtesy Arndt & Partner- Berlin/Zürich.

themes in Brovall's work), they are both ways of accelerating or decelerating time to escape mortality. Obsession is another way of briefly suspending time: excessive eating, the urge to consume, lust. All beings are sooner or later confronted with their finiteness, because from the very beginning their original concept itself is temporary, as the materials Brovall uses indicate. Even after the catastrophe has struck, the sculpture continues to emanate a latent threat. The remnants draw energy from their regained equilibrium and recycle themselves into a nonexistent hybrid being. The sculpture also reminds us that dormant energies that have no outlet present a lasting danger of destruction.

Brovall's sculptures probably contain archetypal aspects of a mythological consciousness that continues to reverberate in Scandinavia while it has faded elsewhere in Europe. Her mythology is primarily contemporary, however. It can be linked specifically to the urge for consumption and for speed, war and ecological disasters.

The transposition of the sexual urge to other areas of life, where it is not always recognised as such, turns up all over the place.

There is still room for poetic accents on the debris of turmoil and doom, ones which in the normal course of things would not even have arisen. Mythical figures right themselves like new gods (or phoenixes?) out of the battered colossi. Feathers, fans and wires appear here and there like artificial flowers that herald an opening towards something promising. Lastly, anyone who views the sculpture from close up will begin to appreciate the consistent use of perishable materials. They cannot in themselves really be called aesthetic, and Brovall does not in fact use them from a point of view of technical perfectionism. It is precisely this that gives them their attraction and specific visual idiom. The artist makes use of accessible materials which at the same time link up with the philosophy underlying her work. She immediately draws everyone involved into the bath of her story. In the first place this means herself, who, after months of toil, realises that her work will not escape its transience. In this way, each time the work is installed it is a slightly different version. Then there are the collectors, who thereby opt deliberately for a transitory temporal dimension in their experience of art. And lastly the public, who realise that the object of the aesthetic experience is not eternal, only the attitude that underlies it. The hopeful possibility of recycling does always remain, however. In fact Brovall's sculptures are at some stage of recycling from the very moment you see them.

*Filip Luyckx*, Curator and critic, artistic director of Sint-Lukasgalerie Brussels



*Sucker*, sculpture 2007  
Courtesy Arndt & Partner- Berlin/Zürich



THESE WERE MOMENTS WHERE  
ONE'S PAST CAME BACK TO ONE IN A  
GRAPHIC REPRESENTATION OF INSATIABLE  
HUNGER, REMEMBERED WITH WONDER AMONGST  
THE OVERWHELMING REALITIES OF THIS  
STRANGE WORLD OF PLANTS, WATER,  
AND SILENCE

# LIV BUGGE

“We cannot possibly get beyond our present level of culture unless we receive a powerful impetus from our primitive roots. But we shall receive it only if we go back behind our cultural level, thus giving the suppressed primitive man in ourselves a chance to develop. How this is to be done is a problem I have been trying to solve for years...The existing edifice is rotten. We need some new foundations. We must dig down to the primitive in us, for only out of the conflict between civilized man and the Germanic barbarian will there come what we need; a new experience of God...”

*-C.G Jung 1936*

*Source:*

*“Wotan”, C.G. Jung. First published Neue Schweizer Rundschau 1936.*

## Klage der Adriane

1. Vers

Wer wärmt mich, wer liebt mich noch?  
Gebt heiße Hände!  
Gebt Herzens-Kohlenbecken!  
Hingestreckt, schauernd,  
Halbtotem gleich, dem man die Füße wärmt,  
geschüttelt ach! von unbekanntem Fiebern,  
zitternd vor spitzen eisigen Frostpfeilen,  
Vor dir gejagt, Gedankel!  
Unnennbarer! Verhüllter, Entstetzlicher!  
Du Jäger hinter Wolken!  
Darniedergeblitzt von dir,  
Du höhnisch Auge, das mich aus Dunklem angeblickt!  
So liege ich,  
biege mich, wende mich, gequält  
Von allen ewigen Martern,  
getroffen  
von dir, grausamster Jäger,  
du unbekannter – Gott...

IF WE ARE IMMORTAL HOW

## Adriane's Complaint

1st verse.

Who still warms me, who still loves me?

Offer me hot hands!

offer me coal-warmers for the heart!

Spread-eagled, shuddering,

like one half-dead whose feet are warmed-

shaken, alas! by unknown fevers,

trembling with sharp icy frost-arrows,

pursued by you, my thought!

Unutterable, veiled, terrible one!

Huntsman behind the clouds!

Struck down by your lightening-bolt,

you mocking eye that stares me from the darkness!

Thus I lie,

Bend myself, twist myself, tortured

By every eternal torment,

smitten

by you, cruel huntsman,

you unknown- god...

Source:

"Dithyrambs of Dionysus", Friedrich Nietzsche, 1887.

Translated by RJ Hollingdale, Anvil Press Poetry Ltd,  
London.



*Shark*, 2008, oil and enamel spray on MDF, 55x65 cm

# EMIL HOLMER

## Convulsive Viewing

Emil Holmer's work always packs an unexpected punch; it is direct, immediate and affects us on a physical level. His recent paintings propose images that enter our bodies through unexpected orifices, using unexpected devices. Gaping assholes, mouths –screaming or choking–, wide-eyed stares and flaring nostrils enrapture the viewer's gaze and aided by a daggered piece of iron, an axe or a whetted knife, prise her open, leaving her gutted and convulsed. Each work forces us into a position of defence, yet denies us any chance to define an enemy. Troops of sharpened implements are pointed forebodingly at us from all sides like bayonets. Nearly every element functions as punctum, puncturing our visual field and scaring our mind with unavoidable afterimages. Reminiscent of a Surrealist canvas, his work is an image-symphony of dangerous elements in uncanny poses. Our gaze is dazzled by the plethora of different objects. The too-muchness, inherent in every depicted scene almost creates a blur that, straining the viewer's eyes evokes pupil-dilation: a sexualisation of the gaze. Like Freud's primal scene –the act of copulation performed by our parents that we have all (supposedly) witnessed– the viscerality of what is seen breeches our defence mechanism and forces us into a libidinally undischarged state. The image holds us in its sway. In a moment of astonishment, wonderment and awe, we are thrown back upon ourselves and double over.



*Descenders*, 2008, oil and enamel spray on canvas,  
280x200 cm

Generally, we recover from such moving encounters by seeking refuge; we try to find security in 'the known'. Already the expression –without achieving any results– of our drive to understand, to figure out and to know makes us feel safe. It is a trajectory initiated by our unavoidable erotic drive, the drive that incessantly 'yearns for', 'ascends to' and which governs our striving towards understanding. While the faculty of understanding necessitates representation, a re-presentation of the images Holmer proposes is incommensurable with their visceral content. We do not want to re-call them, but we feel an almost voyeuristic compulsion to look and ultimately we become attracted by the unmediated rawness.

Fittingly, Holmer's most recent work is inspired by the



*Soft World Knights*, 2008, oil and enamel spray on canvas,  
190x160 cm

palpable unease that constitutes the atmosphere of porn video stores. These spaces, often seedy backrooms or badly ventilated cellar units, function as displaced and repressed areas in our society's collective consciousness. Here the atmosphere smells of the sweat evoked by the stress of an inner conflict where our 'lowbrow' voyeuristic tendency is at stake; the same sweat that lingers at newsstands, where our gaze is almost automatically drawn to the top shelf. Similarly, our eyes are riveted to these canvases, which, without overtly paying lip service substantiate André Breton's dictum that beauty will be convulsive or will not be at all.

*David Ulrichs*, Art Critic



Indrefittas eksistensielle problem, video

## ERIK PIROLT

Hi, I am talking with the priest?

Yes, you are involved with my brain.  
Or you can say that I am  
experiencing your voice.

I am looking out into my head.

So you believe in the twisted anger of God?

That is why I am calling.  
There is something that doesn't make sense.  
You see, my pussy has grown so big lately.  
I can't find any connection anymore  
between the the vibrating power of the lips.

I understand. This is completely normal.  
I guess it is the death-ocean tasting you.  
It is important that you drink a lot of water.

I thought this was founded on religion?

Yes, so it is. But as you can see,  
you are looking into yourself.  
The world is your garden.  
Your physical garden.  
Your pussy is physical, and so is death.  
But it is important that you are aware that it is the  
rhododendron in the death-ocean tasting you.  
And that your destiny is controlled by the

varicose-string of the pussy-pulse.  
As if the pussy-string was so sore  
and tight that you could play on it.  
Like a harp or another string instrument.  
And those notes that fill the space, also  
fill the beat of the waves in the death- ocean,

I can taste it.

## Internal pussy's existential problem

The chances that you have a pussy are about fifty percent and you certainly have experienced that it has grown. Imagine it would grow continuously. What would you do? The video work *Indrefittas eksistensielle problem* portrays four ladies with exactly this problem and how they're dealing with their growing pussy. The four ladies call the priest for advice. A usual reaction is that people laugh about this serious problem, but hidden philosophical codes are incorporated in this free-sexpoetic landscape which allow us to interpret the videos on several levels. Intersections between the physical and the intellectual sphere are picked out as central themes.

The films were shot in San Francisco. The actors don't speak Norwegian and the text was dictated to them. Thus they are not aware of what they're saying. Hence a distance is created between mimics and the words' meaning. It's a play on words, pointing out that language is a free and ambiguous material.

*Erik Pirolt*



*Winds of Change*

# STEN ARE SANDBECK

AN ELEPHANT HERD CROSSES THE SAVANNAH,  
THE SUN GLIDING BACKWARDS ACROSS THE SKY -  
NIGHT FREEZES DAY!

THE BREADFRUIT TREES,  
HAVING GIVEN THE SOOTHING SHADE,  
NOW STAND OUT AS FRIGHTENED SILHOUETTES.  
ONE THOUSAND EYES GLOWING...

SCREAMS IN THE DARK!

THIS IS NOTHING FOR TENDER SOULS;

SMALL BABOONS:

HEAR THE SINGING OF TOADS!



*Lovebirds (Billboard)*



*Soul*



*Gardening at Night*



*Ghost against the Machine*



*Raise Hell(Blackboard)*



Agitator



# JORUNN MYKLEBUST SYVERSEN

## Disco. Disco. Disco

In Jorunn Myklebust Syversen's works we are shown amateurs training and practising in pursuit of fame. These works combine rigorous aesthetic structure with somewhat surprising content. The focus is on cheap glitter and frills, together with white trash. False eyelashes and close-fitting costumes reinforce the smiles and the poses. Decked out in this fashion, these amateurs hunting for perfection are in their element.

Look up the term white trash and you get something like the following definition: white trash denotes white people of low education, income and cultural standards. In other words, they are, so to speak, financially, intellectually and culturally bankrupt. Elsewhere one reads that, as a style, disco has been criticised for its mass-produced hit songs and for being a safe product rather than something dynamic and unpredictable.

American anti-disco attitudes regarded disco as idiotic, as demonstrated by Frank Zappa's satirical song "Dancing Fool", on top of which it was considered girlish and effeminate. Some people were repelled by the image of unbridled sexuality and drugs associated with disco, while others reacted to the exclusivity of disco culture, as symbolised by the doorman who refuses someone entry for not looking right or for wearing the wrong clothes.

*Reach Out and Touch Faith* is a photographic series in four parts. Each part amounts to a sub-category, classified in terms of colours, in addition to which there is a group picture. The series consists of *Light Pink*, *Light Green*, *Black* and *Group*. In *Light Pink* we see couples posing in Latin costumes. These duos resemble comical sculptures competing for the title of perfect couple. Removed from their context they look like figures from some ideal reality. It is as if they were unable to see themselves or each other.

*Light Green* shows single freestyle disco dancers. By introducing them into elitist contemporary art, Syversen lends these dancers lustre while at the same time giving the presumptuous, self-glorifying art world a kick up the backside. *Reach Out and Touch Faith* offers just such a mixture – of costumes and settings that are cheap but meant to look expensive, with what is indeed expensive, namely large-format photos.

*Black*. Disco dance is not so very different from visual art. In both worlds, looks play a big part in furthering careers – even if many people would prefer to deny it. The most successful dancers combine images with a high level of technical skill. In much the same way, the art world has its own expectations with regard to behaviour. Like dancers, artists should come across as flexible, fun and entertaining, yet serious. Behind this mask, which should always be worn with ease – no one looks depressed at a vernissage or on the dance floor – one has to work assiduously.

*Group.* The individual is part of something bigger, and thus subject to expectations. For sure, self-confidence and self-perception are different things, even if both have to do with faith in oneself. The former suggests a trust in one's intrinsic value regardless of one's achievements. If one is good at drawing, one immediately suffers from the loss of a finger. Sense of self is that which is still there to fall back on. If one can attribute no importance to oneself as an individual and is in fact not very good at anything, then the fall from heaven can be painfully short.

Syversen is an artist who grapples with powerful forces. With astute awareness she immerses herself in the pompous and the resplendent. She is daring enough to mix low status culture with things that are meant to be of high value. Few people admit to liking art that is exclusively beautiful. In Norway people labour under a kind of concept-art angst, whereby anything that has the appearance of being based on ideas is considered good. The result is a somewhat rigid and tedious art scene. On top of which, few – indeed very few – people dare to call themselves formalists and declare that they enjoy working aesthetically.

Although Syversen is no formalist, she has understood the benefits of merging the subjects that interest her with a visual language that is bold and up front. Her photographs have a voice of their own and convey to the viewer a standpoint whose mildly hysterical energy transmits double signals. The artist wrestles with Shakespeare on

the one hand and dancers on the other. She alternately criticises and pays homage to aesthetics while questioning people's craving for attention, fetishes and glamour.

Just as disco dancers strive to achieve the perfect dance, the characters in Shakespeare's dramas seek the best solutions to the challenge of life, whether it be through finding love or simply dying. Syversen's works acknowledge the universally human ambivalence that frequently attaches to existential choices. We strive to make the right decisions and recognise the distance between what one struggles to articulate and what one manages to communicate. Gayatri Spivak suggested crossing words out each time they ceased to function. In Syversen's works both the literal language and the visual world are full of contradictions and seem in conflict with themselves.

Jorunn Myklebust Syversen homes in on transcendental choices with an ambivalence that is deeply haunting. The effort of immersing oneself in her art sets something in motion that keeps turning in one's head. One begins to question social vanities, the personal façade and ambition. Who one is when in a group or alone. Her works range from the realm of the dead to the world of glamour, and one is left feeling thoroughly energised. Confused. Enriched and confused. Just like on the dance floor, with a mirror ball turning overhead, repetitively insisting on and absorbing us into its message. Disco. Disco. Disco, disco, disco, disco.

*Line Halvorsen, Curator*



# SVEINUNG RUDJORD UNNELAND

## No Future but Pasts Combined

Talking about the future does not comprise what it used to. Previously it involved some expectant dream about change. Today on the contrary, the same conversation would tend towards a nightmare. That is to say, not completely a nightmare, since one does not dream any more.

There is something exceeding about the time we live in. Not because borders have ceased to exist, but because existence has become as fluid as to the point where it flows over, under, through and past everything which was counted for as a solid base, like a neglected pastry, dough soundlessly and effortlessly ascends past the boundary of its container.

This age of softness corresponds to a climatic change in society by means of an everyday life which is more and more sentimentalized and aestheticized, a warmer society where feelings are in focus. Emotions touch and move us. Hard facts, constricted logic and lucid argumentation on the other hand, do not have that intimate and compelling power. The soft, warm, malleable and flexible have made its presence. Everything has been left to the individual's own continuous interpretation, where in principle every interpretation is possible.

In a soft and individualized world, no inherent directions or values are fixed to reality. To reinstate order, the exchange value of items has become emblematic for our personal value, what we do, and what surrounds



us. Nevertheless the notion of living in an artificially constructed existence is nurturing the urge to “return to reality“, intending to regain solid ground and encounter “real reality“. But what first seemed a solitary straw, soon appears crowded down the road. For you are not alone in wanting to take back the real. Plenty of cultural programs, newspapers, personal trainers, lifestyle-experts and psychologists are readily waiting for you. And with them, a number of objects that might make it possible for you to do exactly those things that you do not have any competence or interest in.

The fact that the art scene has an insidious contempt for the many ties that – elegantly and sadistically – contribute in characterizing the multiheaded organism called *reality*, is rather to be seen as mechanistic logic than an individualistic artistic philosophy or ideology. The art scene may be summarized as a greenhouse for individuality,



authoritarian contempt and desire. Hence, leading to the question; in what kind of soil does the art scene grow its vegetables? Paradoxically, the elements that constitute the driving force and inner logic of an artistic ideal can be alarmingly similar to the ones that are agitated and idealized by the market.

We are in a situation where the decision making parties seem to be exceptionally content. Our culture is simply not able to imagine anything beyond itself, or something supervening it. Both present and future seem to be defined. Indeed, future individuals emerge as similar those we regularly encounter in the presence. Some in *loose-fit*, others in regular. Here and there some longhaired individuals with blues guitars and batik shirts, though most of them dark, practically unclothed, with ragged Adidas t-shirts and loose teeth.

It almost seems to unequivocal that the world is not changing, at least not more than „we“ already „presuppose“. We are in a situation in which we acknowledge religious and cultural conflicts as inevitable, man-made catastrophes' as natural, and absence of cooperation and equality as standard, as norm and obviously the as projected.

In the essay “Bio-logikk“ for the magazine “Replikk”, Jan Freuchen writes that politics is desire and mechanics. Desire, because the decisions that we make always contain some degree of personal distortion; mechanics, because we are part of a larger social construction.

In order break with the plan, a new plan is needed. The new plan should promote action past words and thoughts. To create ideas of something else, deception needs to be a part of the strategy, as reply to status quo, as rebellion against a reality that claims to be rational, and as a tool to imagine something else. Less communicating goodwill and a little more tangible insanity.

*Sveinung Rudjord Unneland*

Sources:

- *Seierens Melankoli*, Paul Otto Brunstad, 2004
- *Virkelighetens Ørken*, Slavoj Zizek, 2002
- *Opsang om maleri og skattestop, servert med en vis portion hykleri*. Christian Schmidt-Rasmussen, 2006
- *Bio-logikk*, Jan Freuchen, 2006
- Conversations and correspondance with my friend Tore K. Andreassen, 2008



*Blindspot Presicion 1*

# ANNE VISTVEN

## ”Das Unheimliche”

“ The German word ‘unheimlich’ is obviously the opposite of ‘heimlich’ [‘homely’], ‘heimisch’ [‘native’] the opposite of what is familiar; and we are tempted to conclude that what is ‘uncanny’ is frightening precisely because it is not known and familiar. Naturally not everything that is new and unfamiliar is frightening, however; the relation is not capable of inversion. In Daniel Sanders’s Wörterbuch der Deutschen Sprache (1860, 1, 729), (...) the following entry is to be found: “

“ Heimlich, adj., subst. Heimlichkeit (pl. Heimlichkeiten):

I. Also heimelich, heimelig, belonging to the house, not strange, familiar, tame, intimate, friendly, etc.

(...) (b) Of animals: tame, companionable to man. As opposed to wild, e.g., ‘Animals which are neither wild nor heimlich’, etc. ‘Wild animals ... that are trained to be heimlich and accustomed to men.’ ‘If these young creatures are brought up from early days among men they become quite heimlich, friendly’ etc. — So also: ‘It (the lamb) is so heimlich and eats out of my hand.’ ‘Nevertheless, the stork is a beautiful heimelich bird.’

(c) Intimate, friendly comfortable; the enjoyment of quiet content, etc., arousing a sense of agreeable restfulness and security as in one within the four walls of his house. Is it still heimlich to you in your country where strangers are felling your woods?’ ‘She did not feel too heimlich with him.’ (...) ‘To destroy the Heimlichkeit of the home.’ ‘I could not readily find another spot so intimate and

heimlich as this.' 'We pictured it so comfortable, so nice, so cosy and heimlich.' 'In quiet Heimlichkeit, surrounded by close walls.' 'A careful housewife, who knows how to make a pleasing Heimlichkeit (Häuslichkeit [domesticity]) out of the smallest means.' 'The man who till recently had been so strange to him now seemed to him all the more heimlich.'

(...) 'Little by little they grew at ease and heimelig among themselves.' 'Friendly Heimeligkeit.' 'I shall be nowhere more heimlich than I am here.' 'That which comes from afar ... assuredly does not live quite heimelig (heimatlich [at home], freundnachbarlich [in a neighbourly way]) among the people.' 'The cottage where he had once sat so often among his own people, so heimelig, so happy.' (... ) Cf: "The Zecks [a family name] are all 'heimlich'." (in sense II) "'Heimlich'? ... What do you understand by 'heimlich'?" "Well, ... they are like a buried spring or a dried-up pond. One cannot walk over it without always having the feeling that water might come up there again." "Oh, we call it 'unheimlich'; you call it 'heimlich'. Well, what makes you think that there is something secret and untrustworthy about this family'?" (Gutzkow)."

"II. Concealed, kept from sight, so that others do not get to know of or about it, withheld from others. (...) 'I have roots that are most heimlich. I am grown in the deep earth.' 'He had achromatic telescopes constructed heimlich and secretly.' 'Henceforth I desire that there should be nothing heimlich any longer between us.' (...) Note especially the negative 'un-': eerie, weird, arousing gruesome fear: 'Seeming quite unheimlich and ghostly to



*Antireflex coating*

him.' 'The unheimlich, fearful hours of night.' (...) "Unheimlich is the name for everything that ought to have remained ... secret and hidden but has come to light' (Schelling)"

Sources:

Sigmund Freud; *The Uncanny* (1919) in The Penguin Freud Library, Volume 14: Art and Literature, transl. and ed. James Strachey (London: Penguin 1990) pp. 335- 376.

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Sakamoto and Geordie

## **The International Church Music Festival in Kristiansand 20th - 24th August 2008**

Welcome to The International Church Music Festival 2008!

This year's festival opens with Robert Schumann's stunningly beautiful but relatively unknown oratorio *Das Paradies und die Peri*. Kristiansand Cathedral Choir and Kristiansand Symphony Orchestra will be conducted by Rolf Gupta and the performance features soloists Isa Gericke, Ann-Beth Solvang, Anne-Carolyn Schlüter, Håvard Stensvold and Fredrik Akselberg.

Repeating last year's successful open-air stage, we are once again delighted to welcome back Atle Sponberg, Per Arne Glorvigen and the Midnight Sun Trio for more

of their lively and informal concerts in Vingården. Atle Sponbergs brilliant “Ba-rock” also makes a welcome return and is among this year’s outdoor highlights.

Thursday’s concert in the cathedral features the Norwegian Soloist Choir and Kyrkjelyd, an exciting early music collaboration between Stavanger European Cultural Capital 2008 and Stavanger Symphony Orchestra.

For those who love to sing, this year’s festival offers a “hymn” evening in the cathedral. Spend Friday evening singing along with some of your favourite hymns to the accompaniment of a full symphony orchestra.

2008 is the 200th anniversary of the birth of Norway’s great poet, writer and thinker Henrik Wergeland. The celebrations include a performance of his comedy for children *Moses i tønden* (Moses in the barrel). The play will be performed in an exciting new version for puppet theatre by Gjert Werring and Anne Ma Usterud.

Carpe Diem presents a thought for the day each morning in the beautiful wharfside chapel (Bryggekapell). The same venue is also host to Saturday’s concert given by students from Kristiansand Culture School.

We are delighted to welcome everyone to a festival which ranges from powerful musical experiences in inspiring surroundings to small, intimate concerts and long summer evenings under open skies in Vingården. The festival closes as ever with a special high mass in the cathedral.

I look forward to seeing you there.

*Frøydis Emilie Lind*, Administrative director

[www.kirkefestspill.no](http://www.kirkefestspill.no)

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