

Skjerp Deg!

12 Feb – 19 Mar 2016 at Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery in London, United Kingdom



Fredrik Raddum, Sad Ghost of Nothingness

'Leave your weapons here', reads the sign by the door. What weapons might these be, one asks? Surely not the dangerously sharpened sticks leaning against the wall beneath the sign. Guns? Grenades? Perhaps dangerous thoughts? Prejudices, brainwashing and hatred? Whatever the weapons may be, entry into SKJERP DEG! (12th of February - 19th of March 2016) at Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery, London, requests the viewer behave themselves, re-examine their attitude and that of their own society, and question certain truths we take for granted. Featuring work by British artist Amir Chasson and Norwegian Fredrik Raddum, as well as an installation by Norwegian artist Sverre Bjertnæs in the gallery's newly-launched Project Space, these three artists present us with fresh ways of seeing the world. They seek to strip us bare and, in doing so, slowly build us back up to a new truth.

Further inside the gallery interior are large nude figures of men – paintings by Chasson. At nearly two metres tall, the oil on linen paintings present these men in familiar poses, somehow charged with testosterone, though it takes one a second to figure out why – the clue lies in the title of the series: Human Photo Reference for 3D Artists and Game Developers. These human references, stripped of all clothes and accessories, are in fact posed ready to fire weapons or jump into action – they embody the violence so glorified by

computer games, stripped back to its most naked humanity. Just as Raddum advises visitors to leave their weapons at the door, Chasson's Human Photo References appear to have done precisely that. The figures are all the more striking for their tightly-cropped composition, their appearance almost claustrophobic. "The work stems from my preoccupation with borders and space," explains Chasson. "This preoccupation also informs the way I want the work to be seen. The single, lone-standing figures are locked into tightly made-to-measure cropped frames, as if by accident I had run out of space. The idea was to force the viewer to look at it awkwardly from close up, rather than the conventional few steps back."

Chasson, who last exhibited at Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery with his 2014 solo show days of oil and gas, also presents another, very different, series of paintings, focused instead on the landscape rather than specific human figures. In a reworking of some of famous socialist, activist and writer Annie Bessant's famous Thought-Forms paintings, the iconic works where Bessant deals with concepts of nature and the power of thoughts, and investigates ideas such as music made tangible, Chasson's Untitled series tackles ideas of borders and space. "Even more than portraiture, landscape painting is the ultimate 'window on another world'," he says. "It dawned on me that there is a kind of link between landscape and intellectual property – I am thinking of a kind of landscape painting that has more to do with issues of power and land ownership than simple depictions of nature. In my mind, the fences and hedges that mark out fields and forests in the UK serve as a metaphor for intellectual property and copyright, for example."

Just as Chasson's Untitled paintings display delineation between the ordered 'real' world (the landscape) and an outburst of phantasmagorical thought forms and shapes, so too Raddum's sculptural works combine order and chaos. With their often satirical undertone, Raddum has explained that his three-dimensional work "requires its own space in the room," as he said in an interview with Lodown Magazine. "The object is then present and ready to start a dialogue with its spectator." He leads us from the striking entrance with Leave your Weapons Here and its forest of sharpened sticks (at first appearing like a display of mismatched antlers, until their true nature is revealed) to a room full of sculptures such as Excavation, a work of perfectly formed, delectably smooth swathes of plaster that give way to a visceral explosion, as if a mini volcano had ruptured the insides of each sculpture – or rather, as if each sculpture had had its brains blown out. His characteristic dystopian themes embody each and every one of his works, forcing us as viewers to question contemporary culture.

Well-known in his native Norway for his large-scale public sculptures, Raddum has been compared to Jeff Koons for his ability to combine kitsch with a ruthless examination of issues such as consumerism and social dystopia. "Pop culture has acted as a catalyst," he continued in Lodown. "This is a medium I use to generate my stories. Also, clearly my work is greatly coloured by my generation's upbringing [on] Playmobil and Lego." This visual language juxtaposes various themes and media – clay meets metal and plastic to intertwine and form intriguing dialogues with each other – also influenced by Raddum's other work in photography and performance.

In addition to the show in the main gallery, Sverre Bjertnæs will have paintings and sculptures on display in a separate space, marking the launch of Kristin Hjellegjerde Projects. "The Project Space will be a way to introduce new artists to the gallery," explains founder Kristin Hjellegjerde. "Kristin Hjellegjerde Projects will be an initiative that allows us to organise pop-up exhibitions in various locations." 2016 marks a four-month stint at 364 Old York Road, just metres from the gallery. Bjertnaes is well known in his native Norway for his unique artistic language. Working with both classical figuration as well as

experimental conceptualism, his exhibitions – as seen here – are visually dense and aesthetically expansive.

Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery

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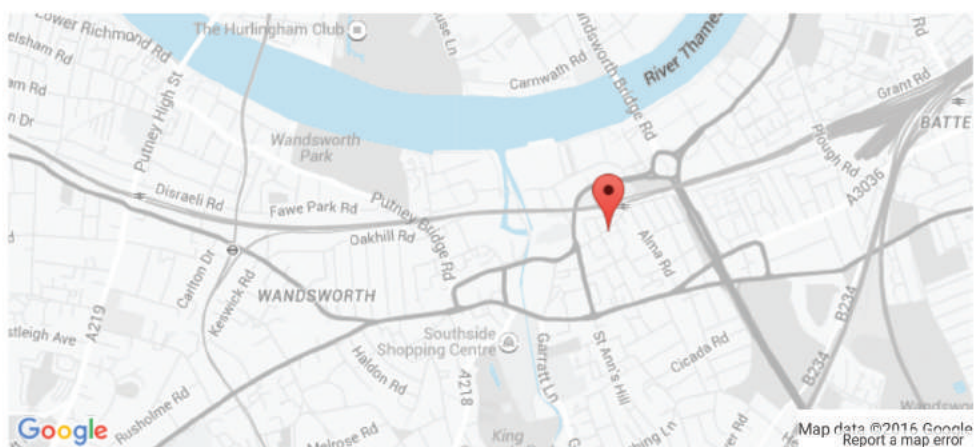
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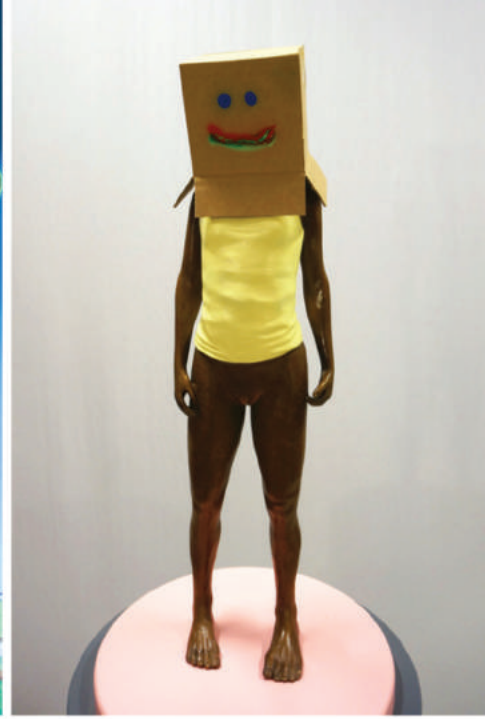
www.kristinhjellegjerde.com

Opening hours

Tuesday - Saturday

From 11am to 6pm





Captions

1. Fredrik Raddum, The Nomad Man
2. Sverre Bjertnæs, A Sculpture by the Sea, 2015-16, oil on canvas, 200 x 180 cm
3. Fredrik Raddum, The Gift Pillow
4. Amir Chasson, Untitled, 2015, oil and household gloss on linen, 200 x 130 cm
5. Fredrik Raddum, The Nomad Lady
6. Amir Chasson, Untitled, 2015, oil and household gloss on linen, 230 x 130 cm