

PRESS RELEASE

Who Observes Whom?

Nynne Haugaard: *Imagining Pictures*

2nd July – 17th August

A six-channel video installation surrounds the walls of Nynne Haugaard's solo exhibition: *Imagining Pictures*. The installation is inspired by a chapter in Danish history around the turn of the century, where people from distant and remote parts of the world were exhibited for public viewing at Copenhagen Zoo. Using contemporary video footage and photography Haugaard draws attention towards the mechanisms that govern the way we form ideas about other cultures and how we formulate a cultural understanding of 'us' vs. 'them' by juxtaposing excavations from the Zoo archives with contemporary reflections of a global and tourism oriented world.



Still from the video installation *Imagining Pictures*, 2011

New Perspectives

Haugaard was able to create this exhibition through researchers Rikke Andreassen and Anne Folke Henningsen who obtained access to previously prohibited archive material, documenting stories of the shows with the "exotic" people, such as the Chinese, Japanese and Indians. Haugaard's aim is to find new perspectives on the encounters between people from different cultures. The exhibition includes examples of how exchanges between the "aliens"

in the Zoo and the audience evolved into different forms of cultural encounter. One example is the Japanese; some of which, after a short period of captivity, integrated themselves to some extent, learnt English and Danish and gradually ceased to be regarded as 'real' strangers.

Who is Observing Whom?

It is not possible to see 360 degrees around *Imagining Pictures*. The stories weave in and out between past and present, using both text and sound. The audience find themselves experiencing what it feels to be exhibited. Haugaard plays with the interpretations that arise when we look upon others and simultaneously forge an understanding of 'ourselves'. The Installation challenges the audience: "*To what extent do we need categories and symbolic images to position our understanding of each other?*"

New Relationships

In the exhibition Haugaard examines the middle ground between images of "the other" and the cultural notions that accompany them. The installation tells the hidden stories of how some of the people on show reacted to their situation, such as the Chinese, who refused to exhibit their feet. Haugaard explains that: "*the use of categories of information is important to orientate ourselves within a transcultural landscape. The installation's aim is to see and hear the world in a quest for an alternative understanding of "them and us".*"

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The exhibition with Nynne Haugaard highlights the current social aspects in the debate on sustainability. Based on archival material and research, Haugaard creates a reflection of human nature, cultural inequality and national self-understanding from an inclusive perspective.

IMAGINE

The exhibition is part of The Aarhus Art Building's (Århus Kunstbygning) themes for 2011: IMAGINE – towards an eco-aesthetic. With this theme The Aarhus Art Building hopes to contribute towards forging new collaborations between art and sustainable development. The theme emphasizes the concept of sustainability's origins and the connections between ecological and social problems which since the early 1970s have been characteristic of the thinking and the development of this concept.

About Nynne Haugaard

Haugaard was educated at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts (2001-2006), Freie Klasse Hdk in Berlin (2000-2001), and the Royal Academy (Det Jyske Kunstakademi) (1998-2000). Her focus often centres on gender, race and social issues. Post millennium she has worked on several projects concerning minority groups and other cultures including a project in Gellerup in collaboration with artist Nikolaj Kilsmark. The two artists lived for a period in Gellerup and set out to rejuvenate its media image and tell stories other than the ones presented in the media. Haugaard has also worked internationally, for example in Kathmandu, and has recently published the book *Wish You Were Here* in collaboration with Nikolaj Kilsmark. *Wish You Were Here* is about art in a transnational context. Haugaard currently lives and works in Copenhagen.

For further information or to arrange an interview, contact Mirjam Joensen on mj@aarhuskb.dk or 86 20 60 59.