

OVERGADEN

Carl Mannov: Kammerspil
4 June – 25 July 2021

The emerging Danish artist Carl Mannov's (b. 1990, DK) sculptural language unapologetically assembles an eclectic mixture of references, from the grandfathers of Danish expressionism, say CoBRA—Henry Heerup and Carl-Henning Pedersen are artistic shoulders Mannov dances on, lightly—to post-iPhone digital living while harboring an intense interest in the crafty ornamentation of carved wooden furniture.

Under these sculptural gestures runs a deep interest in what's in store for us: what's in the heavy cultural backpack with which Scandinavians travel? And, even more importantly, how come—when this stuffed rucksack is unpacked and its contents are put into the grinding machinery called “visual art”—do these things all of a sudden become mysterious, as if there exists a deep clue within them. Why is it that everyone believes that the artistic thing is an “exhibit a”, or in other words, actually a perfect proof of something hidden beneath or beyond its physical appearance.

It is exactly this crime scene of contemporary art—the weird play or Kammerspil (as Mannov's title points to) where any audience member becomes an Agatha Christie figure in the hunt for clues, solving the riddle of the artwork, understanding the depths of the artistic mystery—that lies behind Mannov's show at Overgaden, the artist's first institutional solo show.

Quite literally constructed around a “scene” or stage, in the form of a wall-to-wall carpeted platform in Overgaden's old, majestic column hall, Mannov's tableau includes a series of wooden drawers. These are scattered on the “stage” alongside pieces of clothing, as if someone had hastily emptied a dresser, potentially incriminating themselves in the process; yet having left an imprint of their hand, as does not only the criminal but also, always, of course, the artist. In this theatrical space, the drama of the slippery slope from crime or disguise to artistic performance or artwork is played out. When is something fake, when real, when good, when bad? As with any artist, Mannov is a smooth criminal, and his exhibition goes on to explore and unpick the troubles of the oddly clumsy archetype of the artist. The secretive or ghostly puppeteer behind the artwork is beautifully alluded to in a new series of video works employing YouTube footage fetishizing folding methods of clothing (read: Marie Kondo), yet the hands have been removed and online Reddit chats have become the subtitles to the soothing female voices instructing the garment folding. Someone is behind this, whether behind anonymous names in the chatroom or behind the work of art, doing the work, pulling the strings. Mannov asks wherein lies the bewitching and, hence, artistic magic; and are there any true artistic objects when most sculptures are hollow casts (as drawers or cupboards) only pretending to be solid, putting the swirling, oscillating display of different degrees from artistic to online performances under scrutiny.

Carl Mannov (b. 1990 in Denmark) is a visual artist who graduated from the Oslo National Academy of Fine Art in 2014. Since then Mannov has exhibited in Denmark and abroad at, among others places, Gallery Christian Andersen in Copenhagen, Kunsthall Oslo, STANDARD (Oslo), and Parc de la Fonderie in Brussels, and recently took part in in the group show at Gl. Holtegaard “FED LER.”

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