

Tim Høibjerg

Olof Marsja

Alina Vergnano

*And Darkness the Right Hand of Light*

An exhibition co-curated by NEVVEN and MELK

Hosted by MELK (Hallings gate 5, Oslo)

Apr 8 – May 1, 2022

## Press Release

The two main systems of thought supporting most of our knowledge of physical reality, Quantum Mechanics (QM) and General Relativity, have been both largely proven as valid, yet, when brought to their extremes, to the infinitesimally large or small, these two theories contradict one another wrong by fundamentally describing a universe made of different yet somehow coexisting natures.(1) The fact that the world in which we live is not possible to be congruously described (by science, at least) has a poetic resonance which is impossible to ignore.

If we follow QM to the infinitesimally small particles, the reality around us becomes so incomprehensible to border abstraction and so entangled to make matter almost impossible to be divided into separate entities. This entanglement,(2) in its poetic and philosophical implications is crucial in the work of Norwegian-based

Italian artist Alina Vergnano. Exploring the thin line between figuration and abstraction, capturing the in-between-ness of different states, emotions and techniques, her canvases are grounded in an *abstraction-of-figuration* where bodies, limbs, eyes intertwine on their sometimes minimal sometimes maximalist surfaces. Over-imposed as if capturing the instant within the complex reality of the microscopical, her works uniquely embody fluidity, in its fleeting and impalpable nature, as if they were physics of the emotions reified.

Phenomenology and especially one of its natural extensions: OOO (Object Oriented Ontology) invites to read reality not as stream of causal effects but instead to focus on the perspective of any object, which once freed from its causal relations lives in a stream of unrelated and unique states. It makes us appreciate a new perspective and an almost religious attention to the uniqueness of anything, alive and not, around us. The sacrality derived to all that surrounds us, to each single stone and manufactured item, to each animal and living plant is not only the most obvious result of this advanced philosophical interpretation of physics, but the same thought at the base of the spirituality and religious beliefs for the Sámi (in the North of Europe, for as much as similar ideas can be found among many other cultures from all over the World). It is drawing from both OOO and this ancient knowledge which could have been passed to him by his elders (if the passage would not have been broken by colonialism) that Swedish artist Olof Marsja produces his sculptures. These are objects with a story, a private idiosyncratic story first, but also a

story mediated by a never neutral use of materials and crafts as much as the ability to infuse these hybrid spiritual, philosophical, personal artefacts of great humour, subtle pop references and Gorp fashion.

Fecund, inspiring and, at once, similar to the entangled reality of subatomic matter, hybridity is a territory where also Stockholm based Norwegian artist Tim Høibjerg's practice deeply dwells. Challenging reality as much as our perception of it, Tim Høibjerg brings us into a realm which is frightening and fascinating, horrifying and sensual, dark and bright at the same time. His practice blends and attempts to blur classical dichotomies such as good and evil, or real and digital, presenting us instead with a fluidly erotic world where the male body is often hybridised with amphibious and marine creatures, in installations, videos and sculptures whose queerness reminds of the behaviour of subatomic matter.(3) A realm bordering the abstract and transporting us deep into what could be a dark nightmare, or one's most intimate fantasy.

It is in this darkness and brightness, in their queer interconnectedness and incompatible yet inseparable nature, which reminds to how physics and ontologies have the capacity to both describe our reality and finally not agree with each other, that *And Darkness the Right Hand of Light* wants to invite the viewer to dwell, and venture into the practices of these three artists. Different yet relating, non-causal and omni-comprehensive the works by Alina Vergnano, Olof Marsja and Tim Høibjerg complete and inspire new interpretations of one another, reminding of how all is interconnected and

contradictory, at once and at all times. As an hermaphrodite alien in a far planet and future said: “Light is The Left Hand of Darkness / And Darkness the Right Hand of Light.”(4)

Mattia Lullini & Alina Vergnano

(1) On this topic, of theoretically unending complexity, I'd suggest starting from the comprehensible and, at times, lyrical Alessandro Rovelli, *Seven Brief Lessons on Physics* (2016).

(2) On this topic Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (2007).

(3) Karen Barad, *Nature's Queer Performativity* in *Qui Parle*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (Duke University Press, 2011), pp. 121-158.

(4) Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969), p. 233.

NEVVEN is a non-profit hybrid art space conjoining a gallery and a publicly funded art organisation, located in Gothenburg since 2015. The project promotes an intersectional perspective on the contemporary European art scene and curates a diverse output of exhibitions, disseminative events and contents, in partnership with multiple Swedish public institutions. NEVVEN was founded and is directed by curator Mattia Lullini and artist Alina Vergnano.

MELK is an artist run space located in Oslo since 2009, and the leading initiative for new Scandinavian photography. The project's aim is to raise awareness of the scene of contemporary photographers in the region and the position of the medium today, through exhibition projects in-house, external curatorial projects, art and book fairs, publishing and the like. MELK was founded and is directed by curator Behzad Farazollahi and artist Bjarne Bare.

Tim Høibjerg (Kristiansand, 1986) holds an MFA from the Royal Institute of Art in Stockholm (2021) and a BFA from the Academy of Fine Art in Oslo (2019). He has been exhibited at Art/Sensation (Stockholm, 2022), Konstakademien (Stockholm, 2021), Sørlandets Kunstmuseum (Kristiansand, 2020), Principe Real Garden (Lisbon, 2020), National Academy of the Arts (Oslo, 2018), and Bergen Kunsthall (Bergen, 2017) among others. Høibjerg lives and works between Stockholm, Sweden and Oslo, Norway.

Olof Marsja (Gällivare, 1986) has a BFA from Konstfack University of Arts, Crafts & Design in Stockholm (2017) and was a recipient of the Maria Bonnier Dahlin Stipend in 2019. He was exhibited at Moderna Museet (Stockholm, 2022), The Sami Center for Contemporary Art (Karasjok, 2021), Röhsska Museet (Gothenburg, 2021), NEVVEN (Gothenburg, 2021), Göteborgs Konsthall (2020), Bonniers Konsthall (Stockholm, 2019), and Luleå Biennial (2018) among others. Marsja lives and works in Gothenburg, Sweden.

Alina Vergnano (Torino, 1989) is currently an MFA candidate at the Faculty of Fine Art, Music and Design in Bergen and holds a BFA from the Europe Institute of Design in Turin (2012). She has been exhibited at Ruttkowski;68 (Cologne, 2021), Galleri Cora Hillebrand (Gothenburg, 2021), Museo Ettore Fattori (Livorno, 2020), Gallery Thomassen (Gothenburg, 2019), and Cabinet Studiolo (Milan, 2018) among others. Vergnano lives and works between Bergen, Norway and Gothenburg, Sweden.

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