

Trude Viken / Inside Out

26.01 – 24.02.2023

Opening 25.01.2024 at 5–7 PM

Encountering Trude Viken's art is a breathtaking journey into the advanced processes of decay. In her work the rot has attached itself to the selfie-fixated ego and our self-reflective times. In a world where 92 million selfies are taken daily, her Francis Bacon like distorted faces and naïve mugshots are a redemptive salvation from artificial perfection and the contemporary explosion of narcissism and self-love obsession. One almost wishes to never leave the adorably quirky world she has created.

Beneath the deliriously colorful surface lurks an inherent logic – a slow composting and transformation that is gently injected into all the layers of the (self)portraits. The newer, larger pieces are dizzying in the way they unfold ever more playful and absurd scenes. Figures with protruding cheekbones and duck-lips vie for attention, doing elaborate erotic somersaults, posing with fluffy pets, and baring their vulvas to the bright moonlight.

A film critic's eye is immediately drawn to the overtly cinematic aspects of Trude Viken's painting. How suddenly, out of Portrait 4, Vero from Lucrecia Martel's psychological thriller *The Headless Woman* appears – the elegant upper-class lady who accidentally hits something or someone with her car then flees the scene. Unwanted isolation, creeping fear, and the all-too-recognizable need to maintain a facade in a world that has lost its innocence and will never be the same. Similarly, *Black and White Scene 1* appears to be a drawing stolen from the eerie and lonely children in Norwegian Eskil Vogt's delightfully unpleasant thriller *The Innocents*. And from there, it is a short distance to *The Great Northern Hotel* and *Blue Pine Lodge* in *Twin Peaks*, where Trude Viken's *Red Scene* stares at the guests from the wall in the lobby behind the concierge Julie Duvic (preferably at "the Norwegians" from the pilot episode). Speaking of resorts, there is also something about the couple in love in *Moonlight Dialogue* that evokes the Swedish cartoonist Erik Svetoft's dreamy and terrifying graphic novel *SPA*, where two newlyweds go on a relaxing getaway. In the moldy and increasingly decaying facility, both the guests and the staff begin to dissolve and erode as they are driven, reluctantly, towards their ruin.

At this point, Trude Viken has freed herself from the fairytale that her famous Instagram-breakthrough has been likened to. On her own terms, she penetrates deeper and deeper, beyond the comfort zones, expectations and pretense of middle-class art. All to, with heartbreaking precision, portray our tired souls' longing for Elysium, a tiny kingdom of heaven in the midst of the purgatory of self-absorption. The fact that the person behind these desperately powerful brushstrokes examining our most repressed sides is a parent of three who is trained not as an artist but as a nurse, is a triumph for meta-modern contemporary art. When Trude Viken paints her maladjusted and malformed alter egos it is an act of care, that drives the art further and further away from the ever-threatening decay.

Kasia Syty, Stockholm, 2023

Belenius