

The Isolated Bone

With Andjeas Ejiksson, Iris Smeds, Marion Scemama & David Wojnarowicz

23.11 2023 – 24.02 2024

OPENING HOURS

Wed 13–17 Thu 13–20

Fri 13–17 Sat 12–16

The human skeleton constitutes a coherent unit where each bone supports another, but the fantasy of natural unity is disrupted by one bone which is isolated from the rest. It is located in the throat, just beneath the tongue. Separated from other bones, it is embedded in soft tissue and provides support for the movements of the tongue and larynx. It is vital for the kinds of sounds people can form in the oral cavity – for speech, and for the expression of language.

Through installation, film and theatrical interventions, *The Isolated Bone* touches on a collective concept of truth that is being put out of play. Through a disintegration of public and private, via the spectacle of the family and the rule of law, ideas of a shared reality versus testimony – along with a precarious sense of not being believed – are negotiated.

In three scenes, three voices speak in different directions: To a people. To a house. To defend themselves.

The exhibition consists of three works: Two newly produced installations, *DISORDER-ORDER-DISORDER-ORDER* by Andjeas Ejiksson and *The Millennial Kingdom* by Iris Smeds, as well as the film *Inside This Little House* by Marion Scemama & David Wojnarowicz, from 1989. During the exhibition period, choreographic scenes, a family court, and performance evenings will also take place.

The Isolated Bone is part of a wider collaboration between the artists Andjeas Ejiksson and Iris Smeds and Mint's curator Emily Fahlén. Taking the state, the body and their various enactments – searching for the feeling of alienation that comes with the loss of control – the project seeks to locate the language of theatre in the exhibition space, as well as the potential of art as theatre. Individual works of art and their questions expand into situations where invited poets, artists, and musicians participate. The first instalment took place earlier this year in the form of an evening at Mint titled 'The Family Is the First Spectacle', where Merima Dizdarević & Ivana Đida, Jörgen Gassilewski, Iris Smeds, and Isak Sundström with L.M Klan, performed.

Iris Smeds

The Millennial Kingdom (Scenes 5 and 7), 2023

Video, sculpture, text, wallpaper and digital prints.

The scene is a food court, a private and public square where the family gathers by the trays. The space enacts the effect of a public trompe l'oeil, and one might wonder about the story we have ended up in. Politician Per Albin Hansson looms on the wall in the form of a tapestry, here as the fertility god of the occult social democracy. He who introduced "folkhemmet" [the people's home] as a concept in the language of social democracy during a parliamentary referral debate in 1928. He who believed that Sweden would become a home for all the people, in agreement and in equality.

We have ended up in an abandoned place. The clay houses that are placed here and there are like spirit vessels of folkhemmet. On the monitor, the monologue *The Thousand-Year Kingdom / Scene 5* is performed, where the artist describes the friction of grace and utopia against freedom and destiny:

When I was little my mom forgot to buy a ticket strip and tried to talk the bus driver into letting us on the bus and he said what if everyone did that

What would happen if everyone did that

Relied on someone else to make up for their shortcomings
As you would in a family

What an unfair and beautiful place

Iris Smeds has been working on the film project *The Little House in the Food Court* since 2020. The frame story consists of a queer theatre group that, in an undefined future, settles in the food court of a mall where they stage Laura Ingalls's book series *The Little House on The Prairie* as a play. The theatre group creates scenes that confront and renegotiate different roles and power structures within a family, where the concept of family also functions as an allegory for the state. Rose Wilder, who was the daughter of Laura Ingalls and a prominent figure within American libertarianism when it was established, helped edit the books, thus also making them serve as a political statement against increased government influence.

Smeds's project investigates contemporary anti-statist currents, where collective truth is no longer certain and where the longing to build a little mental and physical house of one's own along with a private family of one's own, seems stronger than ever. Within that framework, the family becomes a political battleground for conservatives as well as progressives. At Mint, in the basement of the ABF building, private life is intertwined with the idea of society as one big family, which signifies folkhemmet. The resolute words echo in a void.

Producer: Elisabeth Marjanovic Cronvall, MDEMC. Photo: Milja Rossi. Sound: Thomas Jansson. Thanks to Signe Bjälkenäs and Vladyslav Kamensky.

Iris Smeds' (b. 1984) practice centres on the marketability of the individual and examines our existence and our society from a poetic and performative point of view. She has a background in theatre and her projects often blur the boundaries between installation, performance and moving image, with a theatrical and surreal visual language. Since 2013, she also performs as the one-woman punk band Vaska Fimpen.

David Wojnarowicz and Marion Schema
Inside This Little House, 1989
8mm video recording

“Sometimes the interior of this house is the universe”

A cardboard house is placed on the grass and smoke is pouring through the windows. David Wojnarowicz speaks of the scene, about the people who live in the house and what happens behind its walls. The three-and-a-half-minute long film is emblematic of Wojnarowicz’s voice in the world. Through improvised speech the statement moves towards a universal relevance. It hones down to a poetic and poignant moment.

Wojnarowicz made the film in collaboration with Marion Scemama during a summer stay in 1989 in a house in upstate New York. She describes it as an improvised play with an 8mm video camera, with built-in effects like stop motion and strobe image. The video camera became a therapeutic tool that could help them move beyond their fears and feelings of powerlessness:

Every event, emotion or feeling was a pretext to create a piece. I really believed, which was stupid, that if I could keep David working and creating, it would prevent him from dying. As if creation could force back death.

The camera went from hand to hand. They were shooting each other, all the time trying new forms, new feelings and emotions:

We were pretty bad, for both of us, dealing with our emotions and feelings about each other. We had great moments of tension in our relationship, but on the other hand, as soon as we were connected through work, there were moments of exaltation and excitement that were extremely strong.

David Wojnarowicz (b. 1954 New Jersey, d. 1992 New York) was an artist, writer, filmmaker and AIDS activist who was influential in the New York art scene during the 1980s. Marion Scemama (b. 1950, Casablanca) is a photographer and filmmaker based in Paris. Wojnarowicz and Scemama met in New York in 1983. Through this meeting they developed a special friendship, which was characterised by mutual support and many collaborations.

Andjeas Ejiksson

DISORDER-ORDER-DISORDER-ORDER, 2023

An installation consisting of video, sound, concrete slabs and car seats.

In the work *DISORDER-ORDER-DISORDER-ORDER*, which Andjeas Ejiksson has made in collaboration with the choreographer Sebastian Lingserius, six people perform a bodily, choreographic enactment of the language that police officers use when reporting on events and interventions. The work is based on examinations of thousands of police reports, all of them from the Norrmalm police district in Stockholm, describing someone being taken into custody. The reports involve a range of situations, from alcohol, drugs, and bar fights, to traffic violations, domestic violence, theft, and escalating confrontations for no apparent reason other than the intervention itself. Many times, these are situations that most people can relate to, although it is obvious that some groups are viewed as more suspect than others. The reports always contain a brief statement of the reasons for the intervention as well as a summary of how it unfolded. Sometimes there are also custody records, interrogations, medical reports, counter-reports, and more detailed incident reports written by the police officers involved during an internal review of the case.

The work consists of an installation in several parts that processes informal linguistic conventions of the sections in the reports where police officers describe events and movements from their own perspectives. The six people who participate in the scenes demonstrate and correct each other, before the camera and those watching. Terms are situated via a range of situations and interpretations, revealing the gap between body and movement on the one hand, and the limitations of text and speech on the other. In the friction between dance and violence, disorder and order, the language of the monopoly of violence, how it regulates the perception of bodies, movements and events, is scrutinised and reexamined – ultimately revealing connections between power and perception, state and individual.

Script and director: Andjeas Ejiksson. Choreography: Sebastian Lingserius.

Producer: Fredrik Egerstrand. Dancers: Majula Drammeh, Noah Hellwig, Robin Ivarsson, Siriol Joyner, Kim Källman, Benno Voorham. Voiceover: Kerstin Wixe.

A photo: Fabian Engström. B photo: Carl Bengtsson. Costume: Ellen Utterström.

Editing: Fredrik Egerstrand. Sound processing: Hans Olsson

Andjeas Ejiksson (b. 1978) is an artist and writer based in Stockholm. His artistic practice explores how ideologies and cultural imaginaries are established through political transitions and processes of translation. Ejiksson works in editorial and textual formats, performance and moving image. He has served as the editor of several journals, researcher at HDK-Valand in Gothenburg, the Royal Institute of Art in Stockholm, and at the Jan van Eyck Academy in Maastricht.

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