

‘No’ is, generally speaking, a better answer than ‘Yes’ (Flann O’Brien) I would prefer not to.
(Bartleby, the scrivener)

Galerie Eva Presenhuber is pleased to present the exhibition “SHALL I WRITE IT” with new work by Oslo-based Norwegian artist Matias Faldbakken.

As an artist, Matias Faldbakken came to international prominence with his disconcerting, direct and provocative position, and as a writer, he also made a name for himself as an enfant terrible of the literary scene with his “Scandinavian Misanthropy” trilogy. His art is based on an engagement with social norms in which he approaches popular culture with gestures that combines refusal and destruction with productive forms of chaos and vandalism – a strategy embodied in “Untitled” from 2010 (with Anders Nordby): the entire exhibition space is covered with the powder from emptied fire extinguishers.

Matias Faldbakken’s heterogeneous work is characterized by his cross-media praxis. His painting, sculptures, videos, and installations cultivate an attitude that subtly addresses doubts over whether any form of refusal can still exist without being immediately popularized. His art inquires into the possibilities of such a position, dealing with the definition, transformation, and interaction of the normative and the marginal: “I guess I am trying to map out the affinity between the exceptional and the normative,” he says, “or to bring out the interaction between the two.” Against this backdrop, both aggression, reduction and quiet abstraction play central roles in Faldbakken’s artistic praxis, where his play with negation become a productive source for his works. Ultimately, the “no” that his works seem to chant becomes a positive, thought- provoking gesture.

The refrigerators strapped together and squashed around the long wall leading off the corridor thus stand for the transformation of everyday items into sculptural objects– part of the artist’s “Squeeze Sculptures” series. Deformed and destroyed, the squashed fridges are removed from their original function and, thus reformulated as sculpture. This process is an applied means of abstraction which for the artist represents less an aesthetic exercise than a technique of spectacularly waisting and discarding commodity objects.

This playing with self-sabotage is also evident in Faldbakken’s “Image Sculptures” – created by conventionally hanging 30 framed photographic prints on the wall in a row before taking them down and strapping them together into a freestanding column. All that remains of their hanging on the wall are the position markings and the screws – as if the pictures had refused to be exhibited, leaving visible gaps as evidence of their absence; what is on display is the refusal of their

distribution so to speak. Leaned against the wall below the spots originally occupied by the pictures in the “Image Sculptures” are large-format PVC pictures (190 x 134 cm) that are linked to Faldbakken’s “Leaning Works” (2005 – 2008), but which are more abstract than their predecessors on account of cut-out and stuck-on elements. Positioned one above the other like this, the negated pictures of the “Image Sculptures” and the PVC cutouts evoke a dialogue rich in conflict.

Faldbakken often uses media and products that grow out of popular culture and have a shaping influence on systems of social order, employing them both as conceptual starting point and artistic tool. While he uses everyday materials and debris of cultural production such as newspapers, magazines, television, video and the internet, as well as spray paint, adhesive tape, and marker pens, language and literature also repeatedly play a central role in his work. This is evident both in the inquiring title of the exhibition SHALL I WRITE IT, and in works like the “Dickens Diptych”, a printed and framed scan from a book, or the work in which 60 copies of Neill Strauss’s book “The Game” are safeguarded in a linen bag tied shut with a string.

Matias Faldbakken’s work was recently shown at dOCUMENTA (13) in Kassel. Solo shows at:
Office for

Contemporary Art, Oslo (2012), The Power Station, Dallas (2011); Neuer Aachener Kunstverein, Aachen (2010); Objectif Exhibitions, Antwerp (2010); Ikon Gallery, Birmingham (2009), and Kunsthalle St. Gallen, St. Gallen (2009).

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