

Stark, sleek, hard, cold, metallic, seductive, shiny, and out of this world—this is the foundational vocabulary I use when approaching Erik Thörnqvist's body of work, currently on display in the pristine gallery space of Bonniers Konsthall.

However,

I have around 700 words to describe beyond what you vividly see and feel, yet also to invite you to engage with the insecurities that come with the freedom of subjective analysis and mindful interpretation.

Other Dead Giveaways

A flower, a fruit, facial hair, jewellery, a piece of clothing - a 'tell' to help the ones with a broken gaydar.

This collection- an array of day-to-day objects- is displayed on custom-made podiums, all holding symbolic meaning in public/private and historic for LGBTQIA+ individuals as signifier objects that help us to find each other in the shadows.

It is what we can today read as queer aesthetics before it got refined and blended into mainstream culture by the 1990s metrosexuals.

Un chant d'amour

A homage artwork in reference to Jean Genet's only film- isolates the famous scene of cigarette smoke migrating between two sides of a prison cell wall through a thin straw.

Although filmed in 1950, it will still take your breath away. It captures an enduring thirst for love and touch in solitary confinement—pure desire and tenderness.

That cinematic moment has become iconic, the appearance of that grey, thick, velvety smoke flowing in a thin trail, drawing figures in the air and quickly vanishing. Discreetly, one can go and place one's face on the water fumes and fantasise about being fantasised about.

Standmaschine

Previously described as a deconstruction of the European Modern project¹, these humanised chairs embody the intersection of contemporary and classic design.

As popularity leads to replicas bought by the unaware, we must question: does authenticity matter? Ultimately, the furniture confronts us with its aesthetic qualities, challenging its intended functionality.

Politics of a Hole is part of a series of sculptures that reflects the historic shift toward white tiles in domestic spaces and promotes an aesthetic of absolute cleanliness while also hinting at the anonymity of public sex. These artworks reinterpret the glory hole, integrating it into tile designs with smooth curves that highlight the oppressive

¹ I SAW IT WITH MY OWN HANDS

Group exhibition text Dec 1, 2023–Jan 21, 2024*

Curator: Tawanda Appiah

Artists: Amin Zouiten, Erik Thörnqvist, Sahar Alkhateeb, Therese Bülow
Skånes konstförening, Malmö

aesthetic of Folkhemmet². These pieces have gained high art status since their debut in 2021. The wall installation transforms the entry space into a portal of infinite possibilities, contrasting an unlikely entry point in a brick wall with a sealed glass ceiling.

Finook

Language can unearth hidden, dark histories. This homophobic slur Finook (Italian) dates to a time when gays were murdered and burned in abundance in Europe - they used fennel to mask the smell of burning flesh.

What does the casting of a blub of fennel mean - like an industrial Trompe l'œil for a fake fruit bowl - a never-rotting vanitas where death doesn't happen?

Is this reclaimed to the arsenal from a dark meaning to turn into the symbolism of power in knowing what happened isn't going to be tolerated again?

Étant Donnés: 1. Le Prêtre

2. Le Fermier 3. Le Fenouil

(2024)

In English-Given: 1. The Priest 2. The Farmer 3. The Fennel

This peephole work is made in reference to Duchamp's super problematic work-

Étant donné: 1° la chute d'eau / 2° le gaz d'éclairage

(in english *Given: 1. The Waterfall, 2. The Illuminating Gas*)

that has been suggested to be connected to the death of the black Dalia.

Krash

This pre-construction "Frankenstein sculpture"³ combines 3D scans of classic artworks, forming a fragmented, modern-day Greek god hero.

It echoes the composition of Goya's etching, *This is Worse*, from *The Disasters of War*, which features a dead man inspired by the Belvedere Torso. Art history teaches us that the most beautiful pieces can be broken fragments, like the remains of Greek sculptures—a melancholic reminder of a glorious past that highlights what is forever lost.

****Sculptures used:**** Borghese Fisherman, Dancing Faun, Dying Adonis, Young Man with Short Hair, Torso of a Nude Young Man

****Scanned by:**** SMK - Statens Museum for Kunst

Vaseline Vision

The blurred abstract photograph, taken in L.A., near the infamous Vaseline Alley, captures a detail of a knockoff T-shirt of "Tom of Finland" spotted in a shop window. The artist visited one of the most storied cruising spots in gay history only to discover an empty parking lot.

² **Folkhemmet** is a political concept that played an important role in the history of the Swedish Social Democratic Party and the Swedish welfare state.

³ **Frankenstein**; or, The Modern Prometheus is an 1818 Gothic novel written by English author Mary Shelley.

You can interpret this as an aestheticisation of *All I Got Was This Lousy T-Shirt* souvenir reflecting an attempt to glorify an experience of detachment.

Abseiling to a Gay Beach

At Côte d'Azur, there is a historic gay beach accessed through a corner of a traditional family beach. The journey involves navigating dangerous boulders, cliffs, and jagged rocks. The final stage of the 30-minute trek requires the abseiling of a five-meter rope recreated as an artwork.

This representation can be a broader metaphor for the challenges marginalised groups still need to face today.

Before / After Is a found object - an illustration of what seems to be the moment before and the moment after (dinner). The Pictures generation⁴ gesture of appropriation is shown around work that requires heavy labour.

Reminiscent of a 1980s advertisement, it evokes a sense of romantic conceptualism.

What happened?

Something

that

changed

everything.

Thanks for reading!

Text by Tal Gilad - writer and independent curator.

⁴ **Pictures Generation** is a group of American artists who came of age in the early 1970s and who were known for their critical analysis of media culture.