

The Astrup Fearnley Museet has the pleasure of presenting a solo exhibition by the Norwegian artist Matias Faldbakken. With this exhibition the museum continues its exploration of the Norwegian art scene in a dialogue with the international art world. While Faldbakken has established a central position in the national and international art world, he remains engaged in a process of great creativity and continuous renewal. The exhibition *Effects of Good Government in the Pit* presents Faldbakken's artistic development in the current decade with works from 2011 up to today. The main focus is on works from the past few years, in addition to two site-specific works that the artist created in an encounter with the architecture of the museum.

During the course of this period Faldbakken has further developed his artistic project by posing questions related to the function of objects and images in contemporary art and society in general. He creates his own artistic language through the deconstruction and undermining of forms, alteration of readymade objects, new collage compositions and experimentation with words and characters. The exhibition's constellation of videos, sculptures, collages, prints, paintings and installations demonstrates the artist's multifaceted exploration and experimentation within various media.

#### From anti-aesthetic to eclectic materiality

Faldbakken has been described as belonging to a generation of neo-conceptual or post-conceptual artists. His artistic practice previously revolved around the concept of negation as it is expressed in avant-garde art and underground culture. Art-historical references such as the historical avantgarde, the neo-avant-garde, minimalism and conceptual art are combined with various expressions of dissension and countercultural forces that result in ambiguous thematisations of the dilemmas of transgression. In the development of his artistic practice in the past few years the austere, minimal anti-aesthetic for which Faldbakken has been famous seems to have been supplanted by a more complex expression and an eclectic materiality.

#### The premises of art production

The exhibition includes several of Faldbakken's distinctive series of works that take their point of departure in various groups of objects such as cardboard boxes, bottles or other types of containers. Through the use of generic and valueless formats as his artistic raw materials, to which negligible or ambiguous artistic interventions are applied, the artist appears to be both challenging the definition of art and drawing attention to artistic actions and processes. This can be seen in, among other works, *Fuel Sculpture*, where bottles and jerry cans are presented as readymade sculptures that are, at the same time, used as casting moulds. Here the artistic idea, the process and the final sculptural expression seem to be nullified. Other series of works take their point of departure in objects that

are connected with freight, transport and packaging, thus addressing issues that are relevant to the production and circulation of art and goods.

#### Site-specific interventions

In this exhibition Faldbakken has created two site-specific installations that engage in a direct dialogue with the architecture of the museum. Three of the partition walls at the museum are covered with tiles. *Tiles Sculptures* thus thematises the museum's "neutral" exhibition galleries by introducing "impure" materials from spheres such as lavatories and underground stations. The installation *Sommerkveld sommerkveld ved ved Oslofjorden Oslofjorden / Fra Fra Oslofjorden Oslofjorden* presents two paintings by the Romantic Nationalism painter Hans Gude. The Oslo Fjord appears as a motif both in the paintings and in the stunning view from the windows of the exhibition gallery. In a provocative move, these historical paintings have been placed sideways on a steel mesh panel from the museum's storage facility. Humour and provocation go hand in hand in this encounter as the contemporary artist almost literally turns historical art upside-down. Here Faldbakken appears to be investigating the underlying premises of art institutions by challenging institutional presentation forms and storage practices.

#### The hegemony of the screen

In a number of works a marked interest in the concept of screens and various forms of screen culture can be discerned. Among the works where this can be seen is the new sculpture series *Screens Overlaps*, where the artist takes his point of departure in various everyday objects that are activated as screen surfaces. Images have been attached to the objects in overlapping sequences that reflect the screen windows of computers. The motifs derive from a variety of sources including art history, literature, internet memes and skateboard magazines, and have been moved, processed, overlapped, cropped and transformed so that their original context and meaning are challenged and drained of meaning. In the exploration of the screen concept and the uncontrollable circulation of images in a digital format, the question is also posed as to what the material potential of art is when the screen holds hegemony. The displacement of images and texts also characterises the artist's twodimensional works, where appropriated logotypes and other source materials are abstracted in the interplay between textual and visual languages.

#### Texts and images

Faldbakken is also known as an author. His trilogy, *Scandinavian Misanthropy*, was published from 2001 to 2008 under the pseudonym Abo Rasul, and this autumn he has released his new novel, *The Hills*. Language and literature play an important role in his artistic practice, where the relationship between narrative and visual forms of expression is constantly being challenged and explored in

new ways. The connection between text and image is a key issue in this regard. In a number of new two-dimensional works text and image materials are processed and displaced, so that their original context and meaning are shifted and undermined. Appropriated materials such as film posters, book dust covers and logotypes are abstracted in an interaction between textual and visual expressions. Seen as a whole, Faldbakken's artistic works constitute a complex examination of issues related to artistic processes and the creation of meaning, the underlying structures of the art world and our digital image and screen culture.

In 2012, Matias Faldbakken participated in the prestige exhibition dOCUMENTA (13) in Kassel and in 2016 on the 11th Gwangju Biennale in South Korea. His works are included in public collections, such as the Centre Pompidou, Paris; Moderna Museet, Stockholm; Jumex Collection, Mexico City, Ellipse Foundation, Lisbon, and National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design, Oslo and Astrup Fearnley Museum in Oslo. Faldbakken is also known for his novels *The Cocka Hola Company*, *Macht und Rebel* and *Unfun* under the pseudonym Abo Rasul. His new novel *The Hills* will be released autumn 2017.

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