

Kunsthall Stavanger presents *Suge*, a solo exhibition by Sandra Vaka (b. 1980 in Stavanger). The Norwegian title, which translates to *Suck*, is a play on humankind's continuous desire to absorb and consume, as well as a nod to our bodily desires and indulgences.

Vaka's practice opens up questions concerning our relationship with technological innovations, climate change and consumption, as well as bodily and sensory perceptions. At Kunsthall Stavanger, Vaka is presenting an indoor exhibition, and the outdoor sculptures *Thirsty* (2019).

In the series *Towels* (2019), Vaka uses analogue photography, which takes on bodily properties when exposed to light. Here, photo paper doubles as both skin and material, absorbing and sucking in light. At first inspection, the works hold landscape properties, resembling aerial photos of an icy landscape, a desert or a forest. On closer inspection, the pixel-like structure of towels appears, made wet by drenching the computer screen with water. The images themselves are covered with streaks of haphazardly applied sunscreen, imprinted on the surface by the artist's body. The sunscreen works as a block against the exposure of light on the paper, letting the body movements and gestures take over parts of the image. The works seem to suggest a closeness between our surroundings and the self, as well as the distance we impose between ourselves and nature. Inherently, they also speak of protectionism in a time where overconsumption is both a driving force and a source of increasing societal fear.

The large-scale works in the new series *Thirst* (2019) draws attention to the body itself. Presented as large scale posters – objects often used to increase desire in the spectator – Vaka surrounds us with a reflection of our own indulgences, needs and cravings. As no liquid content is depicted, only a mouth and a straw, we are asked to focus on the actual act of sucking something in, or the act of absorbing. When moving closer to the works, the image disappears, and we are left with an abstracted, kaleidoscopic effect of condensation on a screen. The female body, though always present in Vaka's works, becomes particularly evident here. In Vaka's works, the body is never simply a passive object being watched – it is an active reflection of ourselves.

Several sculptures titled *Suck* (2019) are placed throughout the exhibition. They carry through the materiality of the wall-hung *Towels*-works, while simultaneously establishing a connection to the *Thirst* works and the act of absorbing. Inherently, they speak of the body, as towels in their most common form are used to wrap around and soak up. Here, they appear as oversized, almost straw-like shapes, covering parts of the floor almost like water dams, awaiting a flood.

Outside the kunsthall, Vaka presents three straw-like sculptures, *Thirsty* (2019). In her work with

outdoor sculptures, Vaka usually creates slow-moving reflections on our contemporary situation. Through the duration of the exhibition period at Kunsthall Stavanger, the sculptures will fill with rain water and debris, which in turn will be subsequent to the climatic context they are placed into. The circulation of water in and out of the straw, will over time form a natural cocktail, inviting the viewer into a further study of the water's shifting condition. In today's debates on climate change, the straw is often seen as an extravagant, mostly unnecessary invention, speaking more to decadence and surplus than actual human needs. Vaka suggest the sculptures as a left-over, forgotten piece of a party the viewer was never invited to, yet must encounter the consequences of.

The exhibition continues Kunsthall Stavanger's focus on contemporary artists from Stavanger with an international practice. Former artists include Lina Viste Grønli, Torbjørn Rødland, Yngve Holen, and Morten Norbye Halvorsen.

SANDRA VAKA (b. 1980 in Stavanger) is an artist based in Berlin and Stavanger. Vaka holds an MFA from The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts and a BFA from Oslo National Academy of the Arts. Vaka has recently exhibited at KaviarFactory in Svolvær, Norway (2019); Polansky Gallery in Brno (2019); KINDL - Zentrum für Zeitgenössische Kunst in Berlin (2018); The Photo Biennale in Danmark (2018); Centro Nacional de las Artes in Mexico City (2017); Stavanger Kunstmuseum (2017); Kunstnerforbundet in Oslo (2017); NoPlace in Oslo (2017); Kunstneres Hus in Oslo (2016); Kunstverein Nürnberg (2016); Lillehammer Kunstmuseum (2016); and Philadelphia Photo Arts Center (2015). From 2011-2017, Vaka was part of running the exhibition space and collaborative project, TOVES, in Copenhagen. She has taken part in the outdoor exhibitions Kunstscenen in Copenhagen (2019); WILDLIFE Sculpture Park in Nesodden, Oslo (2017); and STONEROSSES in Berlin (2014). Previously, Vaka has created public artworks for KORO in a nature reserve in the Northern Norway. At the moment she is working on a permanent outdoor sculpture for Oslo municipality. Her first publication, detailing the longer photo project *Jugs*, is set to be published on Heavy Books next year.

The exhibition is curated by Assistant Curator Kristina Ketola Bore.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sandra Vaka has received production support from Per Erling Ramslands Legat and Arts Council Norway for the exhibition, and support from Rogaland Kunstsenter's production stipend from Bildende Kunstneres Hjelpesfond.

The artist would like to thank Kristian Skylstad for technical assistance, as well as Sandra Mujinga, Camilla Steinum and Illja Wyller, who have posed for the works.

(This document was automatically generated by Contemporary Art Library.)