

EITHER/OR

- Søren Kierkegaard 200 years reflected in contemporary art

“Laugh at the stupidities of the world, and you will regret it; weep over them, and you will also regret it. Laugh at the stupidities of the world or weep over them, you will regret it either way.”
Søren Kierkegaard

Nikolaj Kunsthal March 15 - May 19 2013

David Armstrong Six (CA), Alfred Boman (S), Birgit Brenner (D), IEPE (NL), Christian Falsnaes (DK), Ahmad Ghossein (LB), Jeppe Hein (DK), Tom Hillewaere (B), Pieter Hugo (SA), Stine Marie Jacobsen (DK), Renzo Martens (NL), Cia Rinne (FI), Kirstine Roepstorff (DK), Salinas & Bergman (N), Liv Strand (SE), Tal R (DK), Kerry Tribe (USA), and Lee Yongbaek (KR)

On the occasion of the 200-years' anniversary of the birth of Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard, Nikolaj Kunsthal presents the exhibition *Either/Or*, taking as its starting point Kierkegaard's world famous book with the same title from 1843. Employing the optics of contemporary art, the exhibition will show the aesthetic and ethical issues and choices facing the modern individual of today. The exhibition has been curated by Danish curator Solvej Helweg Ovesen, working in Berlin and Copenhagen.

The artists' works take a close look at the choice as an individual, existential situation. Kierkegaard made the distinction between the two personality types "the aesthete" and "the ethician", a difference expressing itself in the value-based choices made in a person's life. Is the aesthete "the dandy", choosing from the senses and the moment - whereas the ethician typically chooses from an ethical position or based on some political objective? Not dissimilar to aspects of modern existence, Kierkegaard pointed out how the task is for each person to find his or her own truth in life; that there is no one truth for everyone. The exhibition points to the dualities to be found also in modern life today. For instance, a parallel may be drawn between the widespread 19th century use of artist pseudonyms – Kierkegaard wrote *Either/Or* under the name Victor Emerita – and the complex individual of the 2000s, constantly accepting and creatively developing the many sides of his or her identity.

The works of the exhibition have been thematically and spatially categorised from these two optics of how to choose, as well as from two differing motivations behind the creating of art: the aesthetic or ethical points of view.

The aesthete: young Swedish artist Alfred Boman deliberately works in a quick and wild manner with materials, colours and surfaces, referencing contemporary trends in his seductive tableaux of paintings, various arranged objects and statuettes. In contrast to this, experienced German artist Birgit Brenner works with a shored up wall collage on the ambiguities of love and expectations. And Kirstine Roepstorff presents her shadow play work *Vita Umbra*, visually dissolving the church and addressing Kierkegaard's criticism of the church as an institution and his belief in faith as a personal, intimate matter.

The ethician: artists such as Ahmad Ghossein, Renzo Martens or Pieter Hugo, all working with photo and film, are motivated by ethically loaded issues such as the complex and problematic interhuman relations that many witness during globalisation. In his performance made specifically for this exhibition, young Danish artist Christian Falsnaes addresses the "Don Juan tendencies"

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inherent in young men’s slightly restless or aggressive energy when they go out together, in its turn referencing Kierkegaardian notions of sense and passion which he would ideally like to co-exist.

Assistant curator of the exhibition is Kordula Fritze-Srbic (A). The exhibition design has been created by artist and designer Tilman Wendland(DE). An exhibition catalogue will be published to be available on Kierkegaard’s birthday May 5 2013, including, among other contributions, interviews with Søren Kierkegaard and Boris Groys.

The exhibition has been realised in collaboration with the Kierkegaard 2013 Secretariat and the Haus am Waldsee in Berlin, where the exhibition will subsequently be shown in the summer of 2013. The exhibition has been supported by the Goethe Institut Kopenhagen; Embassy of Denmark Berlin, the Obel Family Foundation; the Bundes Kulturstiftung; the Danish Cultural Institute; the Ernst B. Sunds Fond; the Danish Arts Council Committees for Visual Arts and International Visual Arts.

For further information and press photos please contact head of PR Eva Bjerring on M: pr@nikolajkunsthaldk or T: +45 33181784.

ABOUT KIERKEGAARD 2013

In 2013, mainly from May 5 to November 11, the 200-years’ anniversary of Søren Kierkegaard’s birth will be celebrated with events both in Denmark and in a number of cities all over the world. The goal of Kierkegaard 2013 is to spread and qualify knowledge of Kierkegaard’s thought universe in Denmark and other nearby countries such as Germany.

This celebration has been supported by the Danish Ministries of Science, Culture, Education and Ecclesiastical Affairs, the latter of which has granted means for the co-ordinating efforts, as well as by private foundations, supporting various projects during the celebration,

Her Majesty Queen Margrethe II of Denmark is the patron of Kierkegaard 2013.

www.kierkegaard2013.dk