

This Weeks Artist: Maria Finn 28.8.2019

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Maria Finn pursues themes concerning memory, time and landscape. In her artistic practice she combines drawing, sound, video, text and photography where she also relates to literary or filmic works, which she partly deconstructs or uses as a starting point for new fictions.

Just as the borders between the different medias are floating, there can sometimes be hard to differ between fiction and a documentary approach in Finn's multifaceted production. Over all it is a fragmentary universe, where clips from quotes from the universe of literature and film is combined with Finn's own texts. Fragments are put together to create new poetic narratives, that often convey states of mind or deeper psychological layers. Maria Finn's exhibition *Careless Nature* is currently on view at Møstings hus.

Two Kinds of Nature

Through the last years Maria Finn has found her motives in landscapes and patterns in an investigation of modern humans ambivalence towards nature and its representation. This is also the case with the exhibition *Careless Nature*, that uses two vacant lots that has developed organically without interference from planners or other organizations, as a point of departure. With their varied and wild vegetation, the two lots function as a kind of autonomous free areas within the city.

A significant part of the exhibition is the film *Forgetful Nature*, that starts with a quote from a utopia: *News from Nowhere* by William Morris (1890). Here Morris evokes a London where large buildings are dissolved, and forest and orchards have taken over large areas. Finn lets several utopias appear in the film, and thereby establishes a new narration, where the lots no longer represents the forgotten and deserted, but instead appear as new possibilities in urban space.

In the exhibition the vegetation from the lots is reinterpreted in a series of wall drawings and meticulously executed pencil drawings. This in a sense tame the weeds that is depicted as refined,

cultivated patterns. Finn takes an interest in landscape architecture as an expression for the choices made while establishing common social space in the city. But what simultaneously occupies her is how we domesticate nature in design and craft to make it manageable within the four walls of the home.

Another work in the exhibition that mixes techniques and references, is the photographic series *Careless Nature*, consisting of 12 photographs with accompanying texts, that mediates the atmosphere and impressions from the lots. Reflections that again plays on our ambiguous relationship to nature: “When she showed the children the mushroom and said that you could eat it, they looked at her dubiously”. The series combines an apparently sober documentation of the sites, with a narration that appear as fiction.

Until August 2019 Maria Finn in a collaboration with landscape architect Jacob Kamp shows a temporary and site-specific work executed in grass in Amorpark in Copenhagen. This work uses the existing lawns that is cut in stringent, chequered patterns, thereby creating a new spatial experience of the park. The work discusses the relationship between tools to cultivate landscape, where nature is tamed, in contrast to the new concept “urban nature” with a more dynamic and untamed vegetation.

Alternative narrations and displacements

Since her graduation from the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in 1997, Finn has been occupied with the relationship between words and images, and in particular between literary sources for films and the following cinematic solutions, where particularly Ingmar Bergman and Michelangelo Antonioni have been sources of inspiration.

An early work that explore the relationship between text and film is the video *Summer after Monika* (2007), where scenes from Bergman’s film *Summer with Monika* (1953) were recreated in photography and drawing. Here the images were accompanied by quotes from P. A. Fogelström’s literary work, that referred to those scenes, that not were included in the final film. This work offered another take on the films narrative and produced an alternative story.

Accordingly, Finn's photographs and drawings became a new subjective adaptation of *Summer with Monika*, with added independent layers of narrations. This is a recognizable element for Finn, that pursues what happens when one media translates to another, and the original meaning thus takes on another meaning. The film has among other places been shown in the group exhibition *Everything Represents. Nothing is – Ingmar Bergman and the Arts* at Gävle Konstcentrum 2018 on the occasion that Ingmar Bergman would have turned 100 years.

In 2008 Finn was co-curator for the group show *Technically Sweet*, that was shown at Participant Inc. in N. Y. and at Overgaden in Copenhagen. The exhibition used an unpublished screenplay by Antonioni as a point of departure, that the participating artists interpreted. Here Finn made the film *A Technical Problem* (2008); a road movie that takes place in the planned location in Sardinia, accompanied by quotes from the script. Another video that uses a film by Antonioni as a starting point is *Las babas del diablo* (2009), that were shown together with drawings at Den Frie in 2019.

Antonioni's and Bergman's filmic universes were also an important incentive for Finn's Ph.d. thesis (Royal Academy of Fine Arts, Copenhagen, 2010). The thesis with the title *Images Between the Word and the Film* investigated the relationship between literature, film and still images, and a practice-based artistic project was included.

In the same manner the exhibition *Careless Nature* at Møstings hus emanates from Maria Finn's current research project at Institute for Geoscience and Natural Resource Management where she again demonstrates an excellent ability to connect artistic practice with academic research.