

OVERGADEN.

PLEASE JOIN US FOR THE PREVIEW
25 NOVEMBER, 5-8PM

In this exhibition Rolf Nowotny peels the narrative layers away from the art work to investigate the relationship between the materiality and meaning of objects.

Dear Friend

"He thrusts his fists against the posts and still insists he sees the ghost."

Back in that long ago when we were still children I had the worst stutter. Do you remember? The therapist taught me the sentence. And it did help a little. I recited it twice a day, more if I was nervous. At first it was an obstacle for my constricted tongue but with time, when my stammering eventually got better, it became a scenario, a story I could navigate in and form as I wished. I would repeat it in my mind again and again.

Along the years and countless repetitions later the sentence was now stripped down to nothing but bare sounds devoid of initial meaning, mystical and true. And this was where it began to develop into a separate body, an entity that existed within me outside of language. A warm body I could hold and find solace in.

I wanted to tell you this because I now see that you are such a part of me. I might not know you today or recognize in you that childhood friend I once lost but you still remain inside of me. You are a body in my mind. A warm body I can hold and find solace in.

Love
A

To Turn Around While Thinking

Uffe Holm, artist and friend

To avoid interviewing Rolf myself, I have given several other people in Rolf's life the task of each asking him one question. These different relationships, allow him the opportunity to communicate his artistic practice and expand upon the motives behind his exhibition at Overgaden from several angles. My question is whether it is possible to do this on a single newspaper page?

Thor Munck Grønbaek, brother

Even though you are my brother, I know very little about art. I often fail to completely understand your works, but you usually explain them to me, so that I can better appreciate them. But I would really like to understand your art independently, as I believe your art is to some extent the key to understanding you better. Could you share some general thoughts with me, so that I can better understand you and your art in the future?

Rolf Nowotny Perhaps it would help to think of art as a kind of poetry. The language of a poem might not necessarily be logical or consistent, but that does not mean you cannot derive meaning from it, even if you do not quite understand the point. I hope that people can appreciate the expression in itself, even though they may not understand the language - like a beautiful foreign language that you can enjoy listening to. Croatian, or something like that. The good thing about art is that you are usually entitled to your own interpretation and experience of it.

Gerard Byrne, professor, School of Time-Based Media, Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts

Rolf, the last work of yours I've seen, was your Exit show a few years ago. I would simply like to know how being out of the academy has shifted the way you work, and how those changes might be evident in your current show?

RN I'm probably in the process of building up a more coherent body of work. With this exhibition, I am attempting to create a collective installation of objects, rather than individual works. I have for a long time spoken of my work as a "family of things", but this time I want to break down their individuality and create an overall statement.

Henriette Bretton-Meyer, artistic director, Overgaden

What considerations do you make about the specific context when you are preparing an exhibition - could you for instance point out some of the factors that have played a significant role in the making of Full Frontal Nudity?

RN This exhibition was created specifically for Overgaden. The exhibition would feel very different and change its character if it was moved to a different context, as I have had the sensibility and scale of the location in mind while working on it. In general, I think of my works as rather fluid entities, dependent on such factors as geography, the seasons, friends, jobs and economy. That is also why this interview seems like a logical way to talk about my art, because the various interviewers are like different actors who each exert an influence on the outcome of the works; my wife, my friends, my family, etc.

Ditte Gantriis, artist and friend

I find that in your works there is a kind of conversation, whisper or sound quietly running or flowing in the background; both in the object itself, and between the object in space and the observer. This disembodied "soundtrack" - how would you describe it yourself, and how does it enter into your working processes? (When I observe your working practices, it also strikes me every time that it is not until quite late in the process that your works actually materialise. Which means that you must be in possession of an extra large mental artwork simulator.)

RN At the moment, I am thinking about park and garden planning in relation to the presentation of my works, especially for this exhibi-

tion. Just like a walk among trees and bushes in a park, the viewer is led through an arrangement of glass panels, and is presented with different perspectives on the landscape. The glass panels both frame and reflect the jars and dishes on the floor, while simultaneously limiting movement in the room and indicating possible routes. Around the room I have set up ashtrays to act as relaxation breaks, commas, or lookout posts. The horizontal arrangement not only physically leads the viewer around, but hopefully also creates links between the individual ceramic objects. The intention is that the common properties, or conversation, between the objects is emphasised as the eye sweeps across the room, and that the different forms of the various dishes and jars, from open to ever more closed, become animated to a single motion. That may be where the soundtrack is played, in the movement between things.

Peter Amby, art collector

Is it frustrating for you that people can regard objects with so many thoughts, values and diverse emotions behind them just as a kind of peaceful Zen experience that you can just enjoy without thinking?

RN It's not frustrating at all. I always think that my things should have a double body; they may be made with a quite specific intention, but at the same time they should be generous enough to allow room for the experiences and interpretations of others. Because in fact, I think I make these things in order to create a mental space, which allows room for vague or raw emotions.

Olga Nowotny, art historian and the artist's wife

Almost every day you and I talk about your artistic work, but even to me the description of your art often seems a little out of reach. I think there's a certain elusiveness in your practice, in the associations that the works generate, and in the way that the individual objects relate to each other and their titles; a poetic approach that creates a circular motion, in which the objects set in train a series of associations, but through their openness also prevent any conclusion or definitive interpretation, and thereby end up sending the viewers back to where they started. My question is whether you can recognise the aspects that I see in your work, and if you could elaborate on the relationship between the actual objects and the processes that you wish them to provoke in the viewer?

RN I totally agree, and in fact I think you have answered the question very well yourself. But yes, I am interested in the pendulum movement between incomprehensibility and the germination of an understanding. I am interested in the perception and reading of the object, and its possible influence on our identity and cognition. I feel that the integration of the different meanings by which we are influenced throughout our lives sketches out the outline of the person we are constantly changing ourselves to become.

Stine Marie Jacobsen, artist and friend

In 2008, I asked you the following question: "It seems to me that there is a latent, indefinite narration in all



Rolf Nowotny, Full Frontal Nudity (detail), 2011

your works, which relies on a certain kind of subjectivity. Is this of interest to you, or does your interest lie more formally in the material aspects?" In 2011, I am putting this question to you: "In their content and form, your works imitate something human. Is the viewer's encounter with a specific object in any sense a (human) possibility, or do you set the stage for humanistic (un)learning in this encounter?"

RN I am interested in creating a hypothetical scenario in which you experience the pure object in its materiality, without interpretation. An essentially erotic encounter, body-to-body. Not that this is a real possibility, as the reading of the object will always outshine the object in itself. But at the same time, I am also interested in concealing the object under a fine layer of storytelling. I am therefore publishing a booklet in connection with the exhibition, to add a further dimension to the objects on display. I am fascinated by the ways in which a material can carry significant, intimate stories within itself. It sounds like a conflict of interest when, on the one hand, I try to avoid interpretation and to approach pure experience, and on the other, I work with storytelling in relation to the work. It's probably a desire to dissect the different levels of understanding that constitute the complex object experience, by both subtracting from and adding to them.

Jessie Agerskov Hansen, ex-girlfriend and friend

Our friendship goes back almost as

far as your work as an artist, and I've often wondered whether art has helped to shape you, or has mirrored itself in you as a person. So my question to you is, how do you feel that your development as an artist has influenced your personal way of viewing the world, and in that context, how has your practice changed over time?

RN My practice has gone from being a very direct, process-oriented approach towards a less transparent and more fluid form, and I may have become more reflective than sense-oriented as a result. Previously, it might have been the other way around. I have become much more aware of certain things in my life - information and experiences that I can process into possible works at some point in the future. This is the artwork simulator that Ditte talked about.

Christian Andersen, gallery owner

The material is the idea. Or the idea is the material. Do you pretend to have your back to it? Or to put it another way: Do you turn around while thinking?

RN Yes, I certainly do. If you're asking whether I take a sort of intuitive approach to thinking, then that's a good way to put it. Were it not for the prevalent need to communicate, I might be able to make do with that sentence alone.

Front:
Rolf Nowotny, Dear Friend, 2011.

CV

Rolf Nowotny (b. 1978) graduated from The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in 2009. Solo exhibitions include *Mouthbreather* at Christian Andersen, 2011, and *The Yadda Yadda Yadda Operator* at Koh-i-noor, 2009. His works have also been presented at several group shows, among these *Lake of Fire* at Den Frie Centre of Contemporary Art, 2011, and *Med tiden bliver det mahogni* at the artist run exhibition space Pladsen, 2009. Alongside his own practice Nowotny is part of a performative collaboration with the artist Stine Marie Jacobsen, recently in connection with the performance series *Der er nok ting at gøre / Skulptur-situationer* at Skulpturi in 2011. In 2012 he participates in the group exhibition *Spatium* at KUMU, the national museum in Tallinn. Rolf Nowotny lives in Copenhagen.

BOOK RELEASE & PERFORMANCE

Thursday 12 January 2012 at 5pm Rolf Nowotny presents his new publication *The Cataloguer*, which, through the form of narrative, gives a new perspective on the relationship between the works on display. As part of the event there will be a performance in the exhibition.

UPCOMING EXHIBITIONS

Friday 10 February 2012 Overgaden presents the two solo exhibitions *The Voice of Things* by Ebbe Stub Wittrup and *Gestus* by Jakob Emdal. The last day of the exhibitions is 1 April 2012.

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Translation: Billy O'Shea

This exhibition folder can be downloaded from www.overgaden.org



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Rolf Nowotny, Full Frontal Nudity (detail), 2011