

EVENTS

Friday 10 November 5–8pm

PERFORMANCE: *TWO HEARTS THAT BEAT AS ONE* & *DESIRE FOR DOMINATION*

On the opening night, Heine Klausen will conduct his performance *Two Hearts that Beat as One* and Hesselholdt & Mejlvang's will present their performance *Desire for Domination*. Afterwards the remains will be included in the exhibition as works.

Saturday 11 November 3pm

ARTIST TALK: *TROUBLE WITH BOUNDARIES*

This afternoon, the artists Lea Porsager and Tricia Middleton will talk about their collaboration and the creation of their joint work for the exhibition.

Thursday 23 November 6–7.30pm

TALK: *1989–2017 – TO REVISIT EROTIK*

As part of the exhibition, Overgaden invites you to a conversation between the curators Merete Jankowski and Gudrun Hasle and the photographers Pia Funder and Sonja Iskov, et al., who participated in the original exhibition. During the talk they will address topics like the similarities and differences between the two exhibitions, the meaning and reception of the 1989 exhibition *EROTIK*, and the making of a new edition in 2017. The event will be in Danish.

Thursday 30 November 6–8pm

PERFORMANCE & TALK: *THE NATURE OF THE EROTIC*

The focus of this evening is the nature of eroticism and how sexuality has changed over the past 30 years. The programme will begin with a new performance by the artist Nanna Lysholt Hansen entitled *The Matrix*. The event will be in Danish.

Sunday 3 December 3–5pm

SEMINAR: *AS EASY AS DRINKING A GLASS OF WATER*

On the occasion of the exhibition, artists Tine Tvergaard and Jakob Jakobsen have arranged a seminar that unfolds some of the themes in their work. The afternoon includes a conversation with Signe Arnfred and Tania Ørum, who will speak about the feminist Alexandra Kollantai and the dream of sexual revolution during and after the October Revolution in 1917, while Carsten Juhl will talk about the author, curator and philosopher Paul Preciado and his ideas about the pharmacopornographic era. As part of the seminar, there will be a performance by Tine Tvergaard and Jakob Jakobsen. The event will be in Danish.

Image: Lea Guldditte Hestelund, *Zealous (I bet you hope this thing is about you)*, 2017. Photo: David Stjernholm.

This exhibition folder can be downloaded from: overgaden.org

The exhibition is supported by:



DANISH ARTS FOUNDATION CITY OF COPENHAGEN

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OVERGADEN.

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The Complexities of the Erotic

By Gudrun Hasle & Merete Jankowski

Everything in the world is about sex except sex. Sex is about power.

Oscar Wilde

Pia Funder, one of the organisers of the original *EROTIK* exhibition, looks down into her coffee cup and says: “Then some men would just stand there touching themselves when you came in to photograph.” She has been telling me what it was like to be a woman photographer in Denmark in the eighties. That you only used an initial instead of your first name in the telephone book because otherwise you would be inundated by customers that were not really that interested in having their picture taken but just wanted to be watched while they overstepped the boundaries of the person looking. The feeling of vulnerability hits me. That you would have to be P. Funder, T. Kurtzweil, S. Iskov to avoid having your boundaries violated. Being who you really were was too exposed. I think about Emma Holten and revenge porn, and that a lot has changed since the women installed their temporary reception on the first floor of Overgaden – and that a lot of things have not changed at all.

*The spin is brek a lite
Et is a shap and a sof smel
I can fir the depression
I let my fingers slart over the pats*

Since 2013 Overgaden has held an annual exhibition called REVISIT. The goal of these exhibitions is to delve into the art institute’s extensive archive in an attempt to understand what happened in the time before us, and to re-examine some of the numerous artistic experiments that have taken place within its walls in the light of the present. Over the years Overgaden has hosted a vast number of exhibitions – at times four to five simultaneously – many of them in a building that for several years had no permanent staff or joint coordination. As a result, Overgaden’s exhibition archive is vast and varied for an art institution with ‘only’ 30 years to its name. But the holes in the memory of the institution are commensurate with the pace of the exhibitions held here, something we hope to go some way towards redressing with the REVISIT exhibitions.

The exhibition *REVISIT: EROTIK* came into being on the basis of our – co-curator Gudrun Hasle and myself – interest in one of the exhibitions at Overgaden that is among its most legendary: the 1989 exhibition *EROTIK* by 48 women photographers. Depending on who you talk to, it was a feminist manifestation, a contribution to debates on gender and body awareness, a proclamation by women photographers in an artistic landscape that failed to recognise their merits, or simply a tongue-in-

cheek joke. The basis of the exhibition was the same for all the women participating: to interpret the concept of the erotic as they desired (no pun intended). When Gudrun and I started to talk to some of them, the interpretation became no less ambiguous.

*I fir et as a tinkel daun the neck
I strats my back
I nov that im sind*

For some the exhibition had been a crucial milestone in their career, others came to regret their participation. There was the woman who was subject to telephone stalking for two years because of the photograph she had taken for the exhibition, and who experienced Overgaden’s reception being assailed by angry punks – friends of the man in her work who regretted saying yes to being photographed. There were rumours that someone had been given money for the exhibition by a local porn producer and who fell out with others who did not think ‘dirty money’ belonged in what they saw as a feminist space. There were those who didn’t question whether the basis for eroticism was something that took place between a man and a woman, and whose images seemed identical to those objectifying women. And then there were those who tried to portray marginalised desires – between people of the same gender. And the desire to have a different body than the one they had been born with. And something we would never see today – eroticism in the relationship between adults and children. Maybe the greatest source of disagreement was whether the exhibition was a success or a failure – was it a good thing that Japanese sex tourists who had been to a peep show in Nyhavn also stopped off at Overgaden to see some naked flesh? Or did it undermine the entire point of the exhibition?

*I sluvlig drille my fingers darvn
The sand is farn grent and drag
I fir the cool morst the foeter er get daun
I dror larns
I get sand under my nails
Et is iretateneng*

Whilst the participants in the exhibition maybe never reached a shared identity in terms of gender politics, their identity as photographers was apparently far more clearly defined and clear-cut for most – something emphasised by the catalogue cover: *EROTIK* was an exhibition by 48 women photographers. And in our conversations with the participants, it was clear that for many their professional identity was closely related to photography as a craft. From the perspective of today, when all of us have a camera in our pockets that is

technically superior to what many photo studios in the mid-eighties had at their disposal, and when photography has long been one medium among others for many contemporary artists, this insistence on the medium would seem to be a clear indicator of the difference between then and now.

The question of professional identity is interesting in terms of many of the exhibitions at Overgaden in the eighties. *EROTIK* included artists who were professionals with years of exhibitions behind them, alongside what in an exhibition context and in the best sense of the word could be called amateurs – from the Latin for lover – women who had something to say about eroticism, but who maybe had day jobs in industries like film, advertising or other professions focusing on image creation. In *REVISIT: EROTIK* all the participants are professional artists – artists with a defined, established practise based around art institutions. The willingness – and maybe also the courage – to combine the works of those who have made art a one-track career with those who have less bulletproof CVs in the eyes of art professionals is – for better or worse – not the same in art institutions today as it was then.

*My body folds around yur body
I looke at yur wen yur strets
Wen yuer caeri my sleping charli, it varmes
Wen i jost cant harpi my serelf*

There was no centralised curation of *EROTIK* in 1989. Photographers were included because they knew somebody who was participating, and because the people who invited them thought they might have something interesting to contribute. This is something we have also chosen to work with in *REVISIT: EROTIK*, so the exhibition is more the product of a group effort than a central, curatorial vision – a kind of domino effect where the baton has been passed from one artist to another. Initially I invited Gudrun Hasle to be my co-curator because in many ways she has an entirely different point of departure to think about gender and sexuality than me: she is an artist, a mother, a heterosexual and often bases her art on intimate, personal narratives. I am an art historian, childfree, homosexual and the director of an art institution with all the professional discretion that entails. If, as Gudrun and I do, you believe the personal is political, this diversity would seem a good starting point for choosing artists for an exhibition on the erotic. Gudrun and I chose five artists together, who then were free to invite one or two more each. We have decided not to reveal who chose which artists, allowing the polyphonic to be one of the points in the exhibition. The participating artists in *REVISIT:*

EROTIK are Ann Louise Andersen, Ruth Campau, Emma Hedditch, Hesselholdt & Mejlvang, Lea Guldditte Hestelund, Jakob Jakobsen, Heine Klausen, Tricia Middleton, Michael Mørk, Lea Porsager, Tine Tvergaard, and Kristoffer Ørum.

*It is vorm
I ferl a drop of svet, roning dawen my back
I cats the wet fug vef my finger
Im driming
I se et orel from aut sart*

The artists Gudrun and I chose were invited solely because our knowledge of their oeuvre made us think they would have something interesting to say about the erotic as a phenomenon – not necessarily because they had worked with the subject before. It was also important for us that the exhibition included the work of both men and women on the basis that any discussion of eroticism in 2017 has to include both genders – and preferably also that which and those who transcend gender – to even start to be meaningful. Similarly, we did not find it meaningful to revisit the medium specificity that characterised *EROTIK* in 1989 here in 2017.

Porn and eroticism in any traditional or stereotypical sense are strikingly absent from *REVISIT: EROTIK*. To a much larger extent the participating artists have chosen to focus on the art of suggestion, extending their works into material investigations, the political, the mystical, and the humorous. Instead of equating eroticism and sex, *REVISIT: EROTIK* appeals to understandings of the erotic as a complex and multifaceted concept, which whilst it might be inextricably linked to social and cultural conventions, is also wide open to individual sensibilities and interpretations.

Merete Jankowski is director of Overgaden, and Gudrun Hasle is an artist.

Translation: Jane Rowley