

# OVERGADEN.

Press release January 2019

## **Anna Bak: Hermit**

January 26th - March 17th 2019

Exhibition opening Friday January 25th 5-8 am

***What happens if you pull the plug on society and head out into the wilderness without any human contact for thirty days? That is what artist Anna Bak sets out to investigate in the exhibition Hermit.***

The intense human quest for a simpler, more authentic life in harmony with nature has become a prevalent lifestyle phenomenon in the West, accompanied by a romantic idealisation of the wilderness. This dream of a life in closer harmony with nature and the longing for 'simple living' is a romantic and cherished fantasy for many, but what if the dream does not hold water? If moving away from the noise of the city brings no spiritual enlightenment, and nature is nothing like what we see on film? What if we are still just ourselves, with all our neuroses, anxieties and inadequacies when we throw on an Icelandic sweater and head into the woods?

Anna Bak (b. 1985) has dedicated her art practice to investigating the paradoxes and myths spun by the encounter between the artist and isolation in the wilderness, and the destinies associated with that encounter. In the summer of 2018 she decided to take these investigations a step further to experience in the flesh what happens to the human psyche and creativity when you pull the plug on society and stand face to face with nature – and yourself.

In the solo exhibition Hermit she presents the results of this experiment in the form of a series of new works that explore the relationship between isolation, time, routine and self-insight in a range of ways. The works are based on her time in the wilderness, and many of them revolve around the passage of time and repetition, like her series of clay mountains – one for each day of the experiment. Another work consists of thirty self-portraits registering the changing state of mind of the artist during the experiment.

A video work filmed in the woods is central to the exhibition. With diary-like observations and shamanistic rituals it evokes three mythical characters who raise issues of identity, origins and self-reliance. But like the other works in the exhibition, the video also points to the doubt and frustration that arise due to the lack of others as a mirror for the self – and when confronted by the fact that self-imposed exile might not offer any spiritual enlightenment.

With Hermit Anna Bak gives us pause for thought and time to reflect on the paradoxical relationship we currently have to romanticised concepts of nature and authenticity, as well as the role of the artist in contemporary society.

Anna Bak (b. 1985) graduated from the Funen Art Academy in 2012. In 2014 she was granted a residency at the post-academic research institute Jan Van Eyck Academie in Maastricht. She has exhibited at art institutions like Gl. Strand in Copenhagen, Kunsthall NORD in Aalborg, and the House of Art and Design in Holstebro in Denmark – and at Museum Het Valkhof in Nijmegen, Studio 47 in Amsterdam, and Glucksman Gallery in Cork. In 2015 she launched the conceptual artist's book Wilderness Survival – A Guide to the Aesthetics of Survivalism published by the Dutch publisher and exhibition space Onomatopoe.

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