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Oslo

Sandra Norrbin and Victor Lind

LAUTOM CONTEMPORARY

Collettsgate 6

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Juxtaposing Sandra Norrbin's abstractions and Victor Lind's historical reflections, this exhibition offers a space to consider the relationship between discrimination and art. Lind, whose family fortunately escaped the expulsion of the Jewish population from Norway during World War II, documents the deportation of illegal immigrants from Oslo in his appropriated news broadcast *Good Morning–Good Night*, 2005–2007. Also on display is Lind's photo installation *Small Boy at Lunner 1943—do you remember me?*, 2004, which consists of two images hung side by side: one of the artist himself as a kid, the other of a police officer responsible for deporting Norwegian Jews, as seen through night-vision goggles and behind a target. Lind connects, albeit indirectly, the deportation of Jews during the war and the recent deportation of immigrants. When the works are seen alongside Norrbin's *I could wrap my arms around it*, 2008, the problems they address are brought to the forefront.

Norrbin works with industrial materials in a sculptural and site-specific manner that transcends minimalist design, which it initially suggests. Large pieces of insulation, made from recycled clothing and other textiles, are piled floor to ceiling in two of the gallery's main rooms. The work is reminiscent of Christian Boltanski's installations from the late 1980s and early '90s—combinations of clothing and photographs that obliquely reference the horrors of Holocaust—but Norrbin's garments transform catastrophe into abstraction. While Boltanski tells stories of suffering—by heaping, for example, clothes once belonging

to people now deceased—the presence of the Holocaust in Norrbin’s work is discreet, nearly invisible. It is, in fact, unlikely that the work would have brought to mind the Holocaust had it not been featured alongside Lind’s politically and historically charged works.

W. G. Sebald writes, in *On the Natural History of Destruction*, that when catastrophe is invoked in literal terms, it often becomes banal and clichéd (as it does, for example, in Steven Spielberg’s sentimental *Schindler’s List* [1994] or as it did in footage of the Twin Tower bombings, during the period when it was endlessly repeated on television). Something traumatic and unbearable should be addressed indirectly, through a deployment of form, as it is in Alain Resnais’s *Night and Fog* (1955), a poetic film essay on concentration camps, or in a poetry “written asunder,” like that of Paul Celan. If we look at this show from such a perspective, then the abstraction of Norrbin’s sculpture, which integrates historical content with form, becomes an antagonistic image of how individuals can be treated as anonymous groups that can be deported or eradicated. The dialogue between Norrbin and Lind stands, in this respect, in stark contrast to the nostalgic sentimentalism of Boltanski’s treatment of the Holocaust. It also opens, interestingly, a space where the most formal qualities of art are connected with the worst actions of men, as if to tell us that any work of art is deeply rooted in constellations of history and power.

—Kjetil Røed