

Eating You Alive

Documentation of single works and exhibition views from
Galleri Format, Oslo, Aug- Sep 2015. Press relase and
review from Klassekampen by Tommy Olsson included.

Veronica Brovall







Eating You Alive

Sculpture 2013

135 h x 54 x 50 cm

Glazed ceramic



Run Back For pants

Sculpture 2012

134 h x 119 x 66 cm

Glazed ceramic





Still At Work

Sculpture 2012

125 h x 73 x 60 cm

Glazed ceramic



We Got The Blame For Their Pain

Sculpture 2014

75 h x 62 x 26 cm

Glazed ceramic



I Saw The Devil

Sculpture 2012

71 h x 87 x 38 cm

Glazed ceramic



Snakebitten

Sculpture 2012

97 h x 80 x 50 cm

Glazed ceramic





Bodyguards Are Not Enough

Sculpture 2015

185 h x 66 x 66 cm

Glazed ceramic





Do I taste like I've gone off?
by Tommy Olsson Published in Klassekampen (26.08.2015)

Veronica Brovall: «Eating you alive» at Galleri Format in Oslo.

So it's still possible to be struck by the unexpected. I'm not referring to all that damn injustice, although this is regrettably also still happening, with equal force. I'm talking about timing in certain works of art that confirm all suspicions: that the way we perceived the world when we were fifteen was actually correct. No matter how we perceived it – people are different, and all versions of the truth are equally valid. I am rarely right, but the unexpected happened here and has continued to happen during these past days, and I notice when summarizing in this eleventh hour, long after everyone has gone to bed, that I really have to get a grip of myself and eat more yogurt, these coming days.

I expect fall to be abrasive, no bed of roses. Everything can be found in this exhibition, unfolding like a bad omen; it's confrontational in a mail bomb-kind-of-way, sucking nourishment out of dead graffiti pioneers we remember from growing up, and taking our most contemporary sign, the thumbs-up icon from Facebook – making it crystal clear where that thumb is actually beeing driven up.

None of this was really unexpected – not in an everyday life like mine, where stuff like this has to appear in one shape or another (otherwise I have to make them happen, and the last time I did, I ended up losing vast amounts of blood and waking up with bruises shaped like car tracks all over my chest, with no clear memory of what had happened). No, it's the context that gives room to the unexpected.

Firstly, this is about ceramic art. Maybe not such a big deal in 2015 when handicraft seem to be hipper than contemporary art (just so there is no confusion, the work I'm talking about is definitely on the contemporary art part of the field, far away from any line where mix-ups could be made), but still quite surprising.

Not that the medium would be the first thing to notice. We're talking about a visual frontal attack where fragments of text and ambiguous symbols are scattered over the objects like horrid confetti. At first it makes more sense to look for references in painting and sculpture, the first hundredth of a second, before we are flooded by the real meaning of these objects, like a sea of refugees flooding a political party in parliament.

It's this thing about me I can't explain, it only happens when something triggers me enough: the experience becomes physical. My impressions are translated into something I can't reason my way out of, and after a few days it ends in disaster (these disasters are sometimes so small that only I notice them – like just now I happened to look in the mirror and ... well, never mind). Ever since the opening I haven't been able to log on to Facebook without feeling that thumb driven up inside of me, past the sphincter and with a certain pressure over the prostate gland. A confirmation, as earlier mentioned.

The thumbs-up symbol originally dates from the time of the gladiators; the emperor would decide whether a fighter would live or die. Thumbs-down is, as we all know, not possible on Facebook – everybody survives. And more: we even survive ourselves.

Every day it's looking more and more like a cemetery, and I have to remind myself to log out before I go to bed. Meanwhile people my age engage in vigorous discussions about reform, climate change and the razor of the pope – seemingly without that feeling of the thumb that I'm feeling, like a severe constipation, when I am running in the sunshine, after having had eight pints, from Café Sugarlump to the pier of Aker Brygge in ten minutes in order to make the ferry to Nesodden. There I will sit and gasp like a tenderized Kebab that should have been eaten yesterday – which is quite close to what I actually am after 37 years of continuous ecstasy. My way of doing things comes with a certain wear and tear, and I'm really not fifteen anymore.

This particular part of the story is not unpredictable. But Galleri Format is so far away from being a predictable place for art that makes me lose control, I can imagine. Yes, I've been there before. I've discussed textile art. Looked at pottery. Drunk white wine. That sort of thing. I have written reviews about that place, also about ceramic art. Even about ceramic art I liked – because I was stimulated intellectually to do so. But this is so much more complicated to account for, because it challenges my entire being – since I left that place last Wednesday I have found myself continuously thinking about my own death and the threatening title of the exhibition. It's probably a metaphor, nevertheless, I find it difficult to not take it literally, as I notice that I feel increasingly unwell.

I know practically nothing about the artist, except for the fact that she comes from the same country as I, and she has a permanent address in Berlin. (I might be the only person I know who doesn't have this.) To me, who is old enough to remember, this geographical shift seems logical. There is an undercurrent of something organic that gradually takes over, in order to decompose the organised. Something more than quite intense, and very, very motivated. The last time I experienced this was when Berlin was split in two, and a couple of days later I was very grateful to be reminded of this – even if it also became clear how unbalanced this is for me when I have to take a pill in order to sleep, but still don't have prescription for a pill to wake me up. And why do I even want to write about art, really? Well because ... because I sometimes get the rare opportunity to see something like this, and if I didn't write about it I wouldn't go and see it. In that way it is sort of killing me in the long run, but most things are really.

Veronica Brovall

Eating You Alive

13 August – 13 September 2015

Galleri Format Oslo presents the Swedish artist Veronica Brovall's expressive ceramic sculptures.

Brovall's sculptures are direct and audacious. Themes such as sex and violence emerge in figurative elements such as hands, arms, tongues and text. The sexually taunting tongue and virile thumb on cartoonish hands – you can insert your own hand inside them – are recurring elements. The interactive aspect, sexual aesthetic and forceful titles succeed in triggering multiple associations for viewers; they never solidify into one specific message or interpretation.

Brovall mixes figurative elements with abstract geometric forms, placing them on pedestals she has made herself which are decorated with peculiarly-woven chains. The expression is strong and compelling, also on account of the thick glazes that drip down the ceramic surfaces. The sculptures are independent, almost aggressive monuments with formal distinctiveness. Their direct effect could lead to feminist interpretations or to the viewers' own imaginative constructs.

In connection with Brovall's exhibition at Hopstreet Gallery in Brussels in 2012, the art critic Sam Steverlynck called her works 'ceramics with balls'. This description alludes to the artist's breach with the notion of ceramics as old-fashioned and boring. Brovall is progressive in her choice of titles and themes, all of which give us innumerable associations. She innovates in developing sculptural forms and does not allow herself to be limited by space. She breaks out of her own limitations and dares to be larger than herself.

Living and working in Berlin, Veronica Brovall has created numerous international exhibitions. Her works have been purchased by, among others, the Kaviar Factory in Lofoten, Malmö Art Museum and the Modern Museum in Stockholm. She is also represented in the collections of Sweden's Ministry of Culture and Stockholm County Council.

The exhibition is supported by Iaspis: