

VERONICA BROVALL

WEAR THE HEAT

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VERONICA BROVALL: WEAR THE HEAT BY NATASHA MORRIS

"What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow
Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,
You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
A heap of broken images..."

Sculptures in fired otherwise pristine white clay are dirtied with pinks and greys. They appear like casts taken off a fractured bone; in having been used to mend and support they are now cut away and discarded themselves. There is a sense of 'the ghost in the shell' – a phantom manifestation – in that whatever human presence was once behind, or inside, these casings it has now left or decayed. Indeed, one of Veronica Brovall's preoccupations is anatomy, but her approach to form is wedded to abstraction. Are these figures, seemingly suspended in some kind of dance macabre with limbs twisting and outstretched, male or female frames? There is a dynamism here in the apparent movement of Brovall's almost bodies, they stretch, strain and pull, but it is arrested: not caught in a delicate moment but suddenly encased in stone as if paralysed under the gorgon's stare.

As the well-known idiom warns, 'If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen'. Brovall's latest exhibition title instead urges us to stay in the flames. Her concept is one of accepting discomfort, not running from urgency but instead facing it head on and even marinating in whatever hellfire we might find ourselves in. There is a sexiness to her phrasing, 'wear the heat', conjuring a *When Doves Cry* picture of bodies covered in each other's sweat. Wearing heat is in fact what she expects her every material to do, from steel to ceramic, which must emerge from the inferno of the kiln. When the process is finished, however, they become cold to the touch in their final iteration. Heat is a transient moment to be endured or embraced.

Many works appear as instruments, either disconcertingly medical or back alley. Thin, twisted bars of metal with jagged protrusions mimic the improvised tools of a backstreet dentist or abortionist. Carbuncles of rusted rods, like a nexus of golf clubs bent out of shape through the heavy blows of vandals, fizz with a strangely masculine energy. There is a rawness to all her works that is uncomfortable, a forthrightness in dealing with their potential ugliness that is both refreshing and repulsive. *Daily Flesh* straddles the line between being inviting and unwarranted, taking the form of a kneeling behind and topping it with two whipping tongues. These are not the romanticised pots created by rotating between the thighs of housewives or spinsters. They are more likely to be churned from a pottery wheel with a prostitute or anarchist at the pedal.

"Only
There is shadow under this red rock,
(Come in under the shadow of this red rock),
And I will show you something different from either
Your shadow at morning striding behind you

¹ T.S. Eliot, *The Wasteland* (1922) – Part 1 'The Burial of The Dead'



Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you;
I will show you fear in a handful of dust."

Brovall's works are so robust you feel that they are more akin to breezeblocks, needing a sledgehammer rather than a clumsy touch to break them to pieces. The artist exploits the subversive potential of ceramics to its muscular extremes, challenging the gendering of the art of pottery as a feminine and domestic craft with every chaotic and hefty sculpture she produces. To this she adds utilitarian and corporate objects fraught with the symbolism of physicality and masculine pride: buckets, dumbbells, men's suit ties. This is not to say that her works read as straightforwardly 'masculine'. Any references to masculinity don't exactly show its performance as a success; there is a sense of the crisis of manhood, ridden with aggression, guilt, shame and trauma. There are dual elements of the male and the female at play in every work, married together by an overriding sense of 'Nordic Noir' in their fractured, wounded and aggressive countenance. Torsos are separated from the rest of the body without any Classical sensitivity, limbs are akimbo in postures of either lust or torture, any protrusions are fraught with immediate visual parallels to entrails or broken bones. Nearly every work is a 'broken' shell where you can see straight through to the other side. In the final stages of her process, she consistently uses a clear glaze of her own invention, allowing the 'skin' of the ceramic to show beneath the surface – a vulnerability glimpsed swelling under the hardness.

Despite pastel paint in shades of bubble gum pink dripping down the elegant limbs of works such as *Wear the Heat and Body Angle*, Brovall's approach to femininity is consistently indelicate. Sometimes, a black glitter is added to the transparent surface glaze, adding a certain glamour but also a seediness akin to a flash of fishnet stocking. *Daily Flesh*, *Swallow DNA* and *Exude* appear as sister works in their rounded surfaces that are also moulded with multiple buttock and udder like protrusions. It is no coincidence that the appendages of the latter work are created out of containers usually used to whip cream. Seemingly stuck in some timeless post-apocalyptic wasteland, Brovall's breasts are somewhere between the pneumatic chest plates of cyborgs and the stone mammaries of ancient fertility sculptures. They crawl with ferrous, coral-like drips as if they have been dredged from the bottom of the sea, mementoes from a past civilisation that is at once primal and futuristic.

"...where the sun beats,
And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,
And the dry stone no sound of water."

There is a constant tension between life and stasis. References to the organic are more in the vein of petrified wood than verdant branches pulsating with life. Each work could be fashioned from industrial and utilitarian materials, at odds with the delicate process of creating form out of smooth but volatile wet clay. It is no coincidence that although she is a Swedish native, Brovall lives and works in Berlin, a city forever melded to its association with divisive bricks and mortar. In Brovall's case, T.S. Eliot's beguiling line *Bin gar keine Russin, stamm' aus Litauen, echt deutsch* may as well be *stamm' aus Schweden, echt deutsch*. Alongside a Scandinavian straightforwardness, her work is doused with a kind of Germanic, Isherwood-era brutalism oddly concordant with the visceral feeling and taste for destruction that underpins her technique.

Brovall's work is ever obtuse and uncompromising. Symbolism manages to be laid on thick yet is not instantaneously readable. The eponymous work *Wear the Heat* greets us with legs spread-eagled. The smooth surface 'skin' may look invitingly wet, and limbs may be positioned like a multi-armed goddess, or are they contorted into the sorry geometry of a Swastika? Are these statements of censure or playful accidents of form? Stood in front of creations that would be at home in Eliot's ever ambiguous inter-war Wasteland, Brovall too leaves us guessing.

² T.S. Eliot, *The Wasteland* (1922) - Part 1 'The Burial of The Dead'

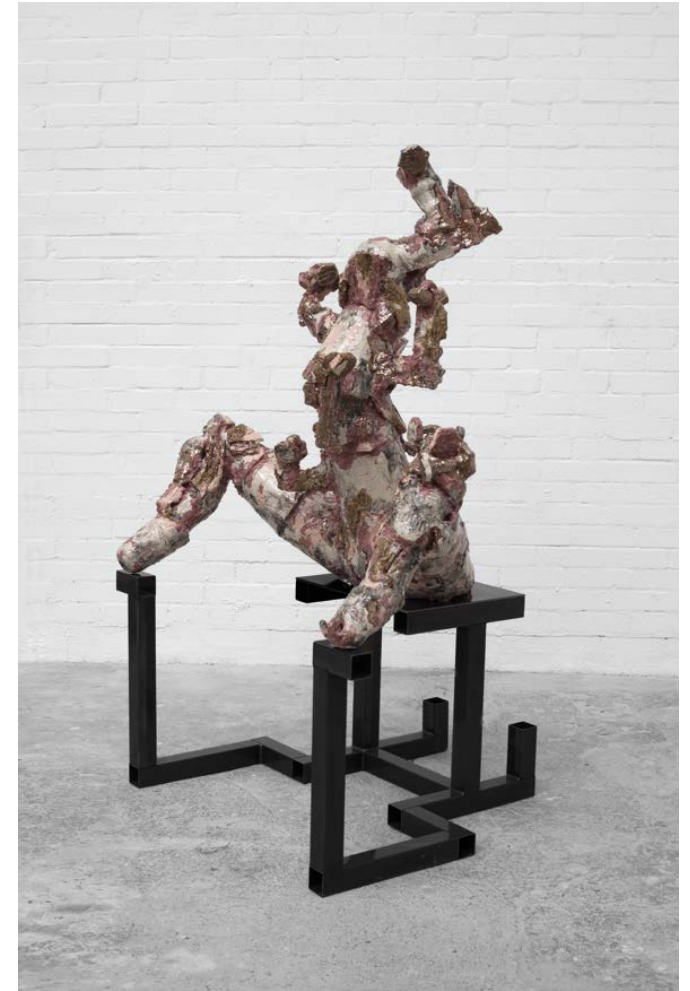
³ T.S. Eliot, *The Wasteland* (1922) - Part 1 'The Burial of The Dead'

⁴ Ibid. Original: I'm not Russian at all, I'm Lithuanian, really German



FEATURED WORKS

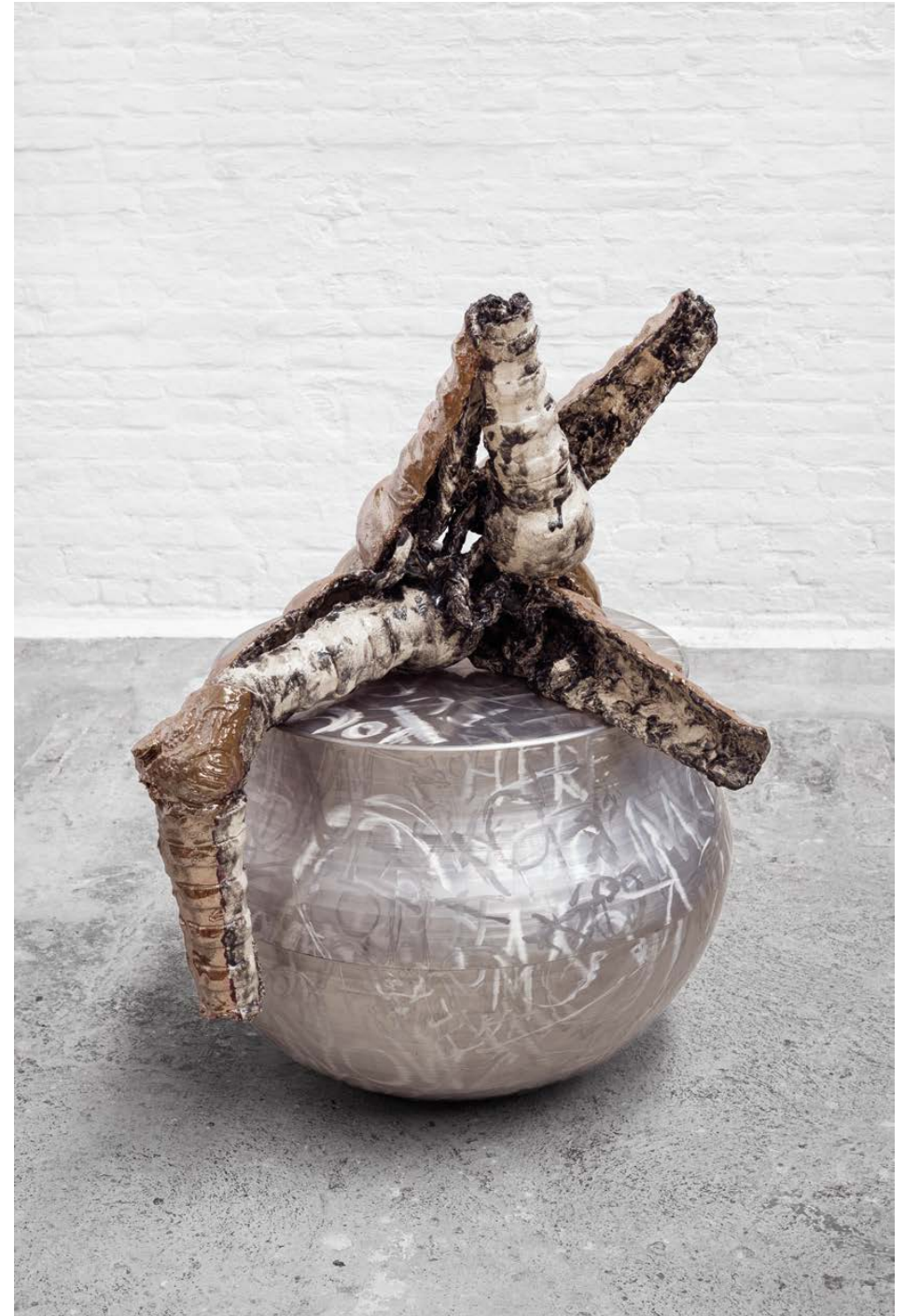




Wear The Heat, 2018
 Glazed ceramic, powder with
 coated steel plinth
 183 x 120 x 104 cm
 72 1/8 x 47 1/4 x 41 inches



Exude, 2018
 Glazed ceramic, powder
 coated aluminium plinth
 119 x 97 x 96 cm
 46 7/8 x 38 1/4 x 37 3/4 inches







Daily Flesh, 2018
 Glazed ceramic, powder
 coated steel plinth
 107 x 86 x 86 cm
 42 1/8 x 33 7/8 x 33 7/8 inches



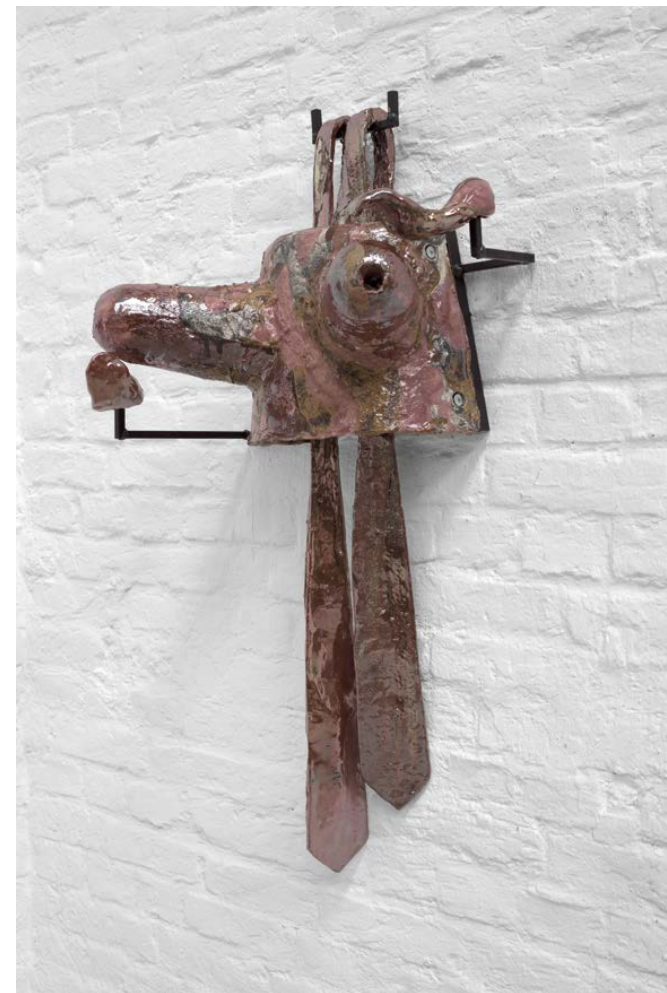


Swallow DNA, 2018
 Glazed ceramic, powder
 coated steel plint
 146 x 79 x 69 cm
 57 1/2 x 31 1/8 x 27 1/8 inches





Body Angle, 2018
 Glazed ceramic
 145 x 55 x 47 cm
 57 1/8 x 21 5/8 x 18 1/2 inches



Embody, 2018
 Glazed ceramic, powder
 coated steel
 106 x 55 x 32 cm
 41 3/4 x 21 5/8 x 12 5/8 inches



Overtone, 2018
 Glazed ceramic, powder
 coated steel
 154 x 75 x 32 cm
 55 7/8 x 29 7/8 x 12 1/4 inches



SELECTION FROM THE SERIES



Skirmish Line, 2018
 Glazed ceramic, powder
 coated steel
 60 x 70 x 50 cm
 23 5/8 x 27 1/2 x 19 3/4 inches



Overtone II, 2018
 Glazed ceramic, powder
 coated steel
 142 x 76 x 31 cm
 55 7/8 x 29 7/8 x 12 1/4 inches



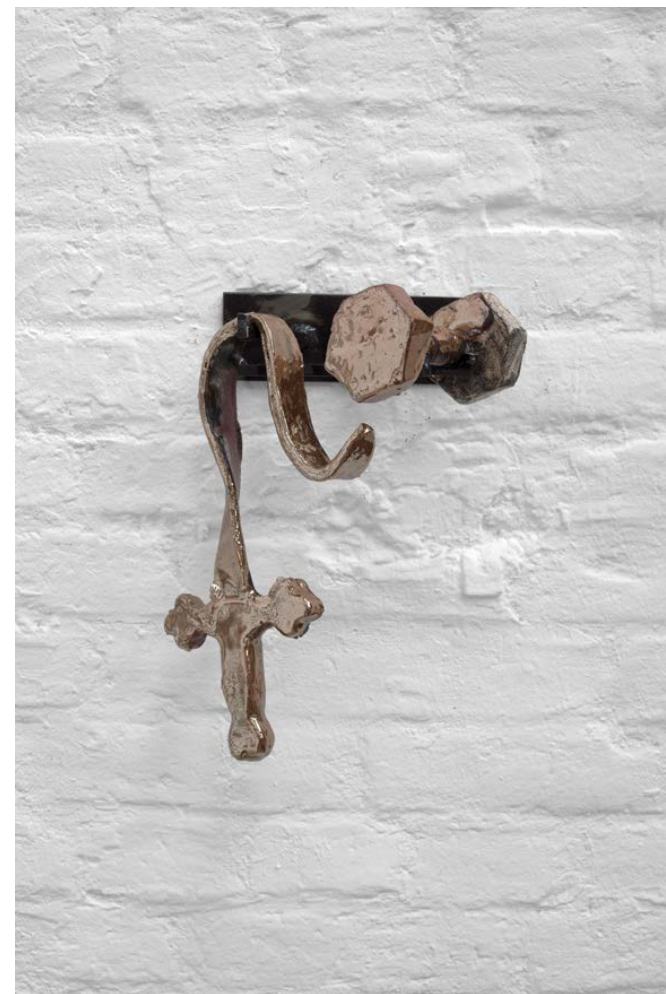
Delayed Mist, 2018
 Glazed ceramic, powder
 coated steel
 56 x 47 x 54 cm
 22 1/8 x 18 1/2 x 21 1/4 inches



Grinding, 2018
 Glazed ceramic, powder
 coated steel
 162 x 170 x 75 cm
 63 3/4 x 66 7/8 x 29 1/2 inches



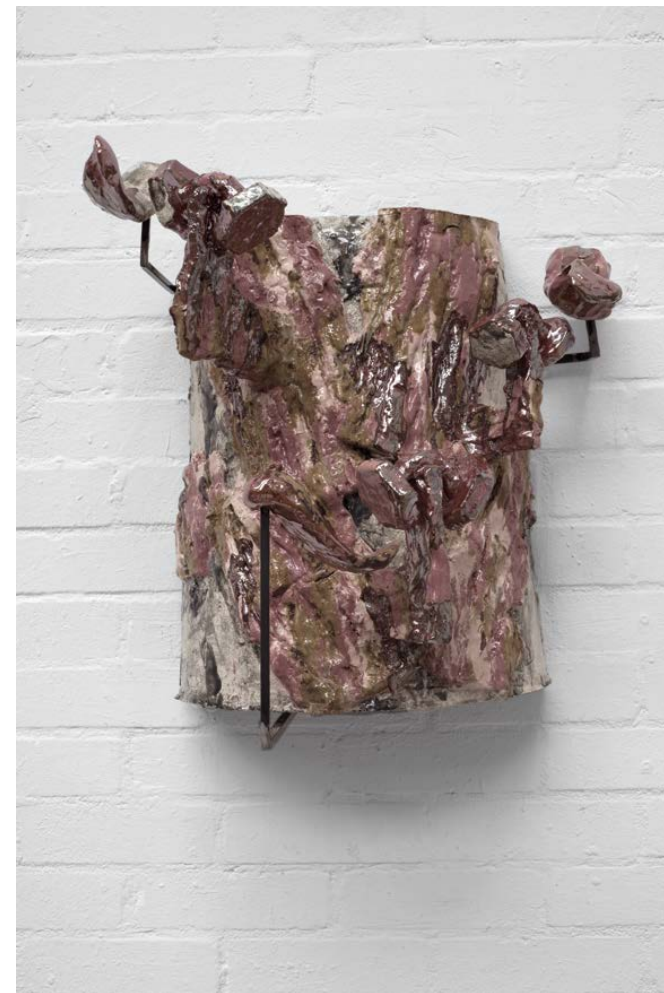
Hem, 2018
Glazed ceramic
27 x 61 x 28 cm
10 5/8 x 24 1/8 x 11 1/8 inches



Dip, 2018
Glazed ceramic, powder
coated steel
35 x 25 x 16 cm
13 3/4 x 9 7/8 x 6 1/4 inches



Vowel Sound, 2018
Glazed ceramic, powder
coated steel
58 x 97 cm
22 7/8 x 38 1/4 inches



Charge, 2018
Glazed ceramic, powder
coated steel
60 x 39 x 46 cm
23 5/8 x 15 3/8 x 18 1/8 inches



Abate, 2018
Glazed ceramic
38 h x 40 x 30 cm
15 x 15 3/4 x 11 3/4 inches



Trespass, 2018
Glazed ceramic, powder
coated aluminium
140 h x 54 x 54 cm
55 1/8 x 21 1/4 x 21 1/p

B I O G R A P H Y

Veronica Brovall (born 1975, Falun, Sweden) is a sculptor, ceramicist and installation artist living and working in Berlin.

Brovall's artistic practice explores themes of femininity, gender dynamics, sexuality and violence through the medium of ceramics. The artist questions the role of ceramics as a material traditionally regarded throughout history of art as feminine, refined, fragile, and belonging to the field of crafts or to the private realm of the household. Brovall uses ceramics as a conduit to challenge the boundaries of the material and its outdated and misleading historical associations. In the hands of the artist, ceramic sculpture becomes powerful, playful and raw and negates any association with traditional conventions of femininity and craft.

The artist's complex abstract sculptures evoke the body, in particular the male and female anatomy, while often merely alluding to it. Elongated arms, fingers and body parts protrude from their base as if the sculptures were consistently and violently expanding, trying to break their mold and give birth to more material. Holes scatter their interior; tongues stick out of their surface; daggers pierce their body in a sort of macabre yet transcending and cathartic dance. Scribbles and notes sometimes cover their skin, like tattoos on the human flesh or graffiti on the walls. Paint drips from the sculptures, splattered across their delicate surface, invoking violent feelings and primal human urges.

Throughout her artistic practice, Brovall turns delicate ceramic sculptures into raw and physical anthropomorphic artworks that straddle the fine line between contested notions of femininity and masculinity, life and death, fragility and strength, violence and beauty, materiality and allegory. By calling into question the conventions permeating history and creating artworks defying easy interpretation and categorization, the artist challenges the boundaries of her medium while giving shape to original objects possessing their own internal logic and narrative, both metaphorical and poetic. Such radical approach to the medium of ceramics places Veronica Brovall at the forefront of a new generation of female sculptors questioning conventional notions of womanhood while striving the reinvent and reshape the century-old medium of ceramics in a contemporary context.

Brovall's work has been exhibited through the world in solo and group exhibitions. Her sculptures are part of numerous institutional collections, including the Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden; Frederick R. Weisman Art Foundation, Los Angeles, USA; Kaviar Factory, Lofoten, Norway; Uppsala Art Museum, Sweden and Malmö Art Museum, Sweden, among others. In addition, her sculptures have been commissioned for numerous public areas throughout Scandinavia.

VERONICA BROVALL

Lives and works in Berlin, Deutschland
(B. Falun, Sweden, 1975)

EDUCATION

2002 Master of Fine arts from the Academy of Arts in Umeå, Sweden

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2017 GAP, double solo with Jakob Kracjik, Hangmanprojects, Stockholm, Sweden
Licking in between, double solo with Emil Holmer, Växjö Konsthall, Sweden
- 2015 Idioms, Galleri SE, Falun, Sweden
Bodyguards are not enough, Haus Dietrich, Berlin
I'm your man, Hopstreet, Brussels
Eating You Alive, Galleri Format, Oslo, Norway
- 2013 Piece of Cake Muscle Life, Ozean, Berlin
- 2012 Logical Sex, U37- Raum für Kunst, Berlin Norrtälje Konsthall, Sweden,
double solo together with Emil Holmer
Expose the Bait, Hopstreet Gallery, Brussels
- 2011 Gotlands Konstmuseum, Visby, Sweden Three solo presentations VB,
Emil Holmer, Erik Bünger
Bait, Galleri Thomassen, Gothenburg Sweden
New Organ, Rod Bianco, Oslo, Norway
- 2009 Lebenstreppe and other new works, Galerie im Regierungsviertel, Berlin
Living, Kunstverein Schwerin, Germany
- 2008 Rootfilling, Autocenter, Berlin
- 2007 Sucker, AK 28, Stockholm, Sweden
Veronica Brovall, Bildmuseet, Umeå, Sweden
Wurzel-Füllung, Arndt & Partner, Berlin
Rootfilling, Sint-Lukas Galerie, Brussels
Collages, OneTwenty gallery, Ghent, Belgium
Rootfilling, OneTwenty gallery; Ghent, Belgium
- 2006 Divorce, Dalarnas Museum, Falun, Sweden
Essen Essen Essen, Glue, Berlin
Knochenbruch, Project space Arndt & Partner, Berlin
Essen Essen Essen, Overgaden- Institute for Contemporary Art,
Copenhagen
- 2005 Essen Essen Essen, Galerie Rautenstrauch, Frankfurt
Home Tunnel, sculpture project made in a house in Ho Chi Minh City,
Vietnam
- 2004 Dominate, open house at Hälsingbergsvägen 26, Falun, Sweden

2003 Own, sculpture installation/performance, in public space, Berlin

2002 Activating, installation in a private apartment, Umeå, Sweden
My order threatens all orders, Gallery 60, Umeå, Sweden

1999 The holder of Bror Hjorth's drawing scholarship 1999, Museum of Bror
Hjorth, Uppsala, Sweden

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2017 Midsummer Mania, Werkhalle Wiesenburg, Berlin, Germany
Mädchenzimmer, Berlin, Germany
- 2016 Above the ARTic circle, Hoff Collection, Kaviarfactory, Lofoten, Norway
Döden en utställning om livet, Galärvarvsparken/Djurgården, Stockholm
The Death of Ceramics, Hangman projects, Stockholm
- 2015 SVERIGE SVERIGE, Galleri 21, Malmö, Sweden
The Silent Dimension, Faculty of Law University of Leuven, Belgium,
curator Filip Luyckx
Stiftelsen Anna-Lisa Thomson Till Minne, Uppsala Art Museum, Sweden
RE/ACT The Art of breaking and building, prinz-georg // raum für kunst,
Berlin
- 2014 Rites of Passage, Skovsnogen Artspace, Denmark
Environmental Impact: Selections from the Frederick R. Weisman Art
Foundation, Frederick R. Weisman
Museum of Art, Pepperdine University, USA
- 2013 Cultural Freedom in Europe, European Economic and Social Committee
(EESC), European Commit
- 2010 Spår-Nyförvärv i konstmuseets samling av nordisk samtidskonst, Malmö
Konstmuseum
Elements of Nature: Selections from the Frederick R. Weisman Art
Foundation, Contemporary Art
Center, New Orleans, USA
Endless Boogie, Forgotten Bar, Berlin
Teckning, teckning...Bror Hjorthföreningens teckningsstipendiater 1992-
2009, Bror Hjorts Hus, Uppsala, Sweden
Elements of Nature: Selections from the Frederick R. Weisman Art
Foundation, Lancaster Museum/Art Gallery, Lancaster, CA, USA
Amsterdam-Berlin, De Service Garage, Amsterdam
Counting Thoughts, the Running Horse Contemporary Art Space, Lebanon,
curator: Mayssa Fattouh
Das Schwedische Modell, Forgotten Bar, Berlin, curator: Jakob Kracjik and
Peter Alp
Defending our values, Galerie im Regierungsviertel and Kunstraum
Innsbruck, Austria
100. Exhibition, Autocenter, Berlin
Hadassah Emmerich curates Hadassah Emmerich, Veronica Brovall and
Tatiana Echeverri Fernandez, Akinci gallery, Amsterdam.
Young collectors #2 /Johan Delcour & Monia Warnez, Groningen, the
Netherlands

- 2009 Defending our values, ccandratx and Galerie im Regierungsviertel, Mallorca
Elements of Nature, The Frederick R. Weisman Museum of Art, Pepperdine University in Malibu, USA
Made in Berlin, Örebro Konsthall, Sweden
Spridd isolerad konst, Kalmar Konstmuseum, Kalmar, Sweden
- 2008 Ephemeral Fringes, Brussels Art fair, Belgium
Ad Absurdum – Energies of the absurd from modernity to contemporary art, MARTa Herford – Museum of contemporary art and design, Herford, Germany, curator: Jan Hoet
5, Runde, Infernoesque, Berlin
Inland Empire, Christianssands Kunstforening, Christianssand, Norway
3 + 3, OneTwenty Ghent meets Artrepco Zürich, Ghent and Zurich
Sculpture is..., Arndt & Partner Berlin
STAND, Oostende, Netherlands
Art Basel, Arndt & Partner
- 2007 Exil, Arnstedt & Kullgren, Östra Karup, Sweden
Frieze Art Fair, Arndt & Partner
- 2006 Anhalt Berlin, Arnstedt & Kullgren, Östra Karup, Sweden
Shiftscale, KUMU, Museum of Art, Tallinn, Estonia (Catalog)
- 2005 Dripped c/o Sweden, A.r.l.A.s, Makati City, Philippines
Ticker zehn, Carlier/Gebauer, Berlin
Me, myself and I, Gutleut 15, Frankfurt am Main/ Glue, Berlin/ Hobbyshop, Munich
- 2004 Berliner Kunstsalon, Glue, Berlin
Haka & Co, Uppsala, Sweden
Korsnäs Gummi Biennalen 2004, Falun, Sweden

AWARDS AND FELLOWSHIPS

- 2016-18 Swedish Art Grant Committee – 2 year working grant
- 2015 IASPIS 2015 support for exhibition abroad
- 2012 IASPIS 2012 support for exhibition abroad
The Längman Cultural Foundation
- 2010-12 Swedish Art Grant Committee – 2 year working grant
- 2008 Swedish Art Grant Committee – projectsupport
- 2007 Landstinget in Dalarna, Cultural Grant
- 2006 Swedish Art Grant Committee
IASPIS 2006 support for exhibition abroad
- 2005 IASPIS 2005 support for exhibition abroad
Ester Lindahls Foundation

- 2004 Helge Ax: son Johnson
- 2003 Swedish Institute
- 2001-2 Royal Skytteanska Associations price
Gallery Ahnlunds travel grant
J C Kempe foundation spring 2001, autumn 2001, spring 2002
Bröderna Molanders Foundation
- 2000 Fredrika Bremer Foundation

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