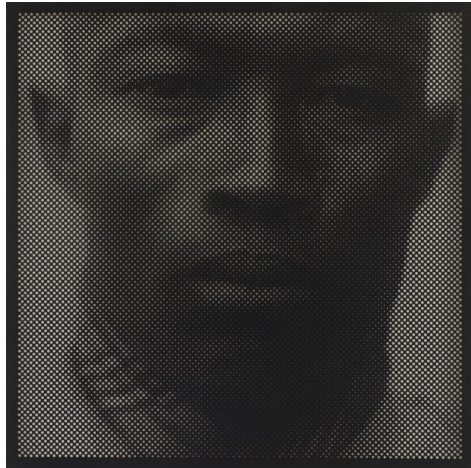


Anne-Karin Furunes: Illuminating Nordic Archives

National Nordic Museum, Seattle

15. mars – 8. juni 2025



In Furunes's first solo exhibition in a US museum since 2010, she will present paintings inspired by the historic and recent photography of Svalbard, a Norwegian archipelago situated between the North Pole and Norway. She studies the pioneering autochrome photographs captured by botanist Hanna Resvoll-Holmsen (1873 – 1943) more than a century ago, alongside more recent documentation of glacial recession and ice calving. The effects of the climate crisis are magnified and multiplied in Furunes's monumental format and unique technique. Her perforated paintings on canvas are singular images that resemble the halftone process of printing.

Another group of paintings on display includes portraits of people from Finland, Norway, and Sápmi who were subjected to government-ordered sterilization and documentation between 1900 and 1939. Drawn from her "Of Faces" series, these haunting portraits raise awareness of the Nordic countries' participation in eugenics practices in the early 20th century. Furunes finds in Sweden's oldest library—Carolina Rediviva at Uppsala University—archived images of silenced, ignored, and persecuted individuals. She then translated these documentary photographs into large-scale paintings, portraits in the humanistic tradition. Through her powerful work, Furunes exposes the victimization of humans and of nature.

This exhibition is organized by the National Nordic Museum Chief Curator, Leslie Anderson, in collaboration with the artist. It is offered as part of the National Nordic Museum's 2025 bicentennial celebration of Norwegian immigration to the United States.



Anne-Karin Furunes (b. 1961, Ørland, Norway) is a leading artist of Scandinavia in painting and public commissions. Since 1992, Furunes has developed a signature technique of perforating canvas or metal that considers photographic and digital elements of space, light and material. The punctured holes in her works mimic the halftone process, most popularly used in periodicals. Furunes does not employ a computer to create the image however, but composes it manually.

“I do each hole by hand, and I use different punch holes of different sizes—thirty different sizes.” Furunes explained. “I sit with the canvas on the floor and I make each hole by hand, so this almost meditative process of doing the painting is a very slow process.” Substituting ink with light, she creates a star pattern on a diagonal grid, cutting each hole by hand to create an image through the way the human eye perceives light.

Furunes’ process is centered on archival photographs that she finds, preserves, and edits. With a keen eye for human figures, she is known for her striking and thought-provoking black-and-white portraits. Tackling, among other things, issues of climate change and the painful history of eugenics in Scandinavia, Furunes centers her work on the human, individual aspect that these social and environmental atrocities imply. The Sámi people, indigenous inhabitants of Fennoscandia, frequently appear in her work as particularly vulnerable to the disasters the artist considers.

Furunes’s method of removing in order to reveal complements her research-based practice that often focuses on forgotten histories and people, injecting a tangible human and current element to archival photographs. By literally bringing the images of the forgotten into light, her process as an artist is a metaphor in and of itself.

Trained as an artist and architect, Furunes received her degree from the Trondheim Academy of Fine Art in Norway. Furunes lives and works in Stjørdal, Norway.

She is represented in prominent public collections worldwide including the Espoo Museum of Modern Art, Finland; Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art, Finland; Kistefos Museum, Norway; Museum of Arts and Design, NY; Museum of Art, Norway; Palazzo Fortuny, Italy; National Museum, China; National Museum of Contemporary Art, Norway and the Tromsø Museum of Contemporary Art, Norway; among others.

Images:

Anne-Karin Furunes, *Of Faces IX (Portraits of Archive Pictures)*, 2016. © Anne-Karin Furunes; Courtesy of the artist and RYAN LEE Gallery, New York.

Anne-Karin Furunes, *Calving Glacier XII, Kronebreen, Svalbard*, 2023. © Anne-Karin Furunes; Courtesy of the artist and RYAN LEE Gallery, New York.

Anne-Karin Furunes in her studio. Photo by Kalle Eriksson.