

## TIMBER FRAMING FOR THE GLIMMER OF THE WORLD

There is a visible friction between materiality and image in Sara Christensen's artistic practice. The works' constructed forms allude to a different temporal frequency than the image world she evokes. Christensen saws, sews and welds, and the handcrafted objects feed off a constant stream of images. Some are lifted out and incorporated into the objects; they remain fixed there, in contrast to their transitory nature. This gesture is enhanced by the traces of industrious labour visible in the way the works have been created.

The motifs in the series *The Front of the Back* could pass as illustrations, near-satirical drawings with a lively character. They depict everything and nothing: drama and trivialities from people's lives and realities. These images are not depicted on the surface; rather the outlines of the drawings are unnaturally constructed in MDF, before being painted gold. The saw has been forced through the material, creating a choppy contour of the lines, and this laborious process can be glimpsed through caricatured motifs. The material, as such, becomes a hard-earned wooden framework for its veneer, but also its polar opposite. The images that want to hurry past are seized and put on display in a kind of buoyant *tristesse*. The rolling wheels are punctured by the resistance of the material, encased in the golden glaze, poured over the scene.

*The Third Eye* is a homemade, small pyramid, created from welding together steel plates. The eye socket projects a video image onto a Plexiglas screen, supported by the pyramid itself. The image is of a planetary landscape, a glowing glimpse of outer space. It has its origins on Earth; it is, in fact, a tablecloth filmed through a glass of beer. The beer glass acts as a filter, comparable to other ways of filtering the world: through personal experience, through faulty glasses, through systems and modes of thinking. As a symbol of the divine, spirituality and capital, the Third Eye represents different ways of interpreting and organising our surroundings. Here, a view of the universe emerges; let's call it the experience of the whole, initially via the glass you hold in your hand. The pyramid then takes over the image and presents it as an unreliable truth. However, the deceptiveness of the depiction is thrown back at the pyramid's eye. Images and worldviews come into being via detours and roundabouts; they emerge by means of the quotidian and larger, less manageable systems and entities. The tilted Third Eye shows us great ideas coupled with insufficient methods; illusions that have potential, nonetheless.

The gallery floor replaces the water's surface for the objects in *Floating Voters*. Details such as zippers, eyelets, curtain cords and rope have been sewn into rain jackets, towels and other textile

material, which have, in turn, been shaped into beach balls, rafts, and buoys. They are recognizable in their maritime form, but somehow out of shape. They are cheerful, yet sinking; foretold their fate, but still flying the flag. In this way, *Floating Voters* could have been left bobbing up and down between perdition and eternal optimism. But the game is over, and the current conception of the ocean is different from what it was. The sleeve of a jumper in the work becomes the child's wool hat you saw in the newspaper, and the human dimension of these makeshift vessels emerges. There is hope for the future in the colourful fringes, but the individual bundles have become vulnerable, and their precarity is radical. The ambivalence in the work, oscillating between safety and danger, has also changed character: when the work was first shown in 2012, you could sidestep the bundles strewn on the floor. It felt like a slight shove in the back on the crowded bus: an interruption, but no more than to be expected. Here and now, the works pack a more powerful punch, which lands somewhere between the stomach and the heart. Despite the specific backdrop of recent events, the details and the bright colours give rise to associations with an idyllic childhood in the West, complete with roller blinds and reef knots in the Scouts, indicative of a common societal foundation. But we are adults now, and the values inscribed in these familiar forms are in flux and cannot be fully trusted. The title *Floating Voters* indicates a normative framework in the process of being altered, as well as acting as a testament to the importance of those who are floating: those without a political anchoring point or far from a safe harbour.

In Sara Christensen's work figuration is snatched from here and there, and then pawned. The elements can be cashed in at any time, and returned to their original context. Until further notice, however, value resides in bits and bobs that unexpectedly become legal tender in our understanding of the world. As a consequence, the distance between the everyday and the systemic shrinks. Political awareness enters through the backdoor whilst you are drinking coffee. You take a single sip and pour the rest over the monument.

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