

Creative Endgame

Silje Linge Haaland's exhibition at Galleri K in Oslo tracks the increasing artificiality of life in our postdigital, pre-apocalyptic present.

By Zofia Cielatkowska 05.06.19 Review Artikel på norsk



Silje Linge Haaland, *Blant*, 2019, installation view. Photo: Øystein Thorvaldsen.

When I enter Silje Linge Haaland's exhibition *Blant* (Among) at Galleri K in Oslo, what initially captures my attention is not the objects on display in the entrance, but distant noise music leaking out from the dark room ahead. After adjusting to the rhythm of the sound and the lack of light, I carefully begin maneuvering between the branches and roots spread out on the floor and covered in reflective tape. At the back of the room, a video (*Blant*, 2019) – the only source of light – is playing on a big screen.

Blant

Silje Linge Haaland

Galleri K, Oslo

3 May — 9 June 2019

Haaland videos all have a rough-edged, makeshift feel, and she refers to them as “desperation animations.” It is an invented term that refers to a style of editing where montages of clips from disparate sources are furnished with rudimentary ‘special’ effects like colour-inversion, conspicuous zooming, and sped-up playback. In *Blant*, joggers move through an urban landscape while traced by the red dot of a laser pointer; a scene with people taking pictures on the street is suddenly illuminated by a rainbow-coloured flash; an ophthalmologist examines eyes using a little flashlight; and images of forests and parts of branches or roots crop up frequently. Sometimes a root appears in cut-out form, like a symbol floating over the image.

In the entrance area, a carpet imprinted with an image of a transparent plastic bag filled with mussels is suspended from a glass shelf (*ved* [beside], 2019). On the wall above it, three squares are marked out with black velcro tape. A tree trunk with a long line of integrated SIM-cards (*I* [in], 2019) stands upright in the middle of the room. Next to it, atop a carpet with an image of a hand clutching an ambiguous object, is a silicon cast of a foot nested in a jagged clump of plaster (*hos* [with], 2016). Two other carpets printed with stills from *Blant* – of the cut-out root and the people taking pictures in the street with the rainbow flash effect – are affixed to the walls in weird spots, as if installed by whim. In her video *Blant*, Haaland employs the tactic of recurrence



Silje Linge Haaland, *I*, 2019, detail. Photo: Øystein Thorvaldsen.

– the same figures appear in different forms and places, again and again. Similar tactics of repetition can be found among the physical objects in the exhibition, which echo and reflect each other.

Even when her source materials are video recordings made in natural surroundings, the artist seems to impress that what one perceives can only be a copy, never something real. Through her digital processing, Haaland's images are given the appearance of simulacra. Everything looks to be a reflection of something else. The same applies to the physical objects: the wooden branches are wrapped in a reflective tape that functions as a mirror, drawing attention away from the objects themselves. All of the works carry the names of prepositions, again pointing away from the concrete objects, to their spacial relations to other objects. What for?

Obviously, one basic condition of reflection is light, and the exhibition's construction emphasises this. The dark room in which the only source of luminosity is an artificial screen stands in stark contrast to the daylight-flooded entrance area, as if reminding us of the question: What does it mean to perceive things? Our ability to see is contingent on light; without it, we are effectively blind. But light is not only a prerequisite of sight. In photosynthetic processes, light also provides energy to plants so they can produce the oxygen and organic compounds that all living things rely on. The equation is simple: without light, there is no life. However, despite its thematic obsession with light, the conclusion intimated in Haaland's exhibition seems rather dark.

The trees and roots are dry, the mussels empty. The only source of 'animation' is the screen. Haaland's works look like errors, jokes, mistakes, trash. They are broken objects and distorted images evoking an atmosphere of anxiety, hopelessness, and failure – a mood perhaps fitting in the face of pending ecological crisis. In the twisted reality of the pre-apocalyptic world, all relations change, and the human adoration of technology, development, and profit makes as much sense as SIM-cards attached to a tree. In the twilight of the anthropocene, what is left to us is only to sift through and re-examine the debris of humanity's bygone reign – for as long as we still have light.



Silje Linge Haaland, *Blant*, 2019, still image from video.

Blant

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