

The Hair Allure

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Marit Folstat employs diverse media, techniques, objects and tropes to express herself. Nevertheless when pondered the present scope of her work it displays a great consistency. There could be no straightforward telling what the work really signifies - the psychological drama underlying most Folstat's work is too complicated to categorize as a whole - however there are few constants that could be pointed out. At the core of the work is the body, used in a performance, its image shared with us through the video. and the medium presented either as a whole however more frequently a certain part are singled out. The face most frequently. The men's or women's faces used are forcibly expressionless, nevertheless they are seeping with the inner drama. We are witnesses to the inner struggles, never allowed to fully comprehend the scope of the protagonists inner struggles. The reasons for the enneted situation are kept from us as well. Formally beautiful there might be shattering revelations underneath of which we will be never made privy. But there is a great deal of humour as well. Thus there is always an element of surprise, of the unexpected action which however minute it might be shakes our believe that we understand the concept of the piece. However spare the gestures are they could the translate it into a tidal wave of emotions.

I was introduced to Folstat work by the 2011 piece No Strange Delight.. This two channel video, with the soundtrack by Lasse Marhaug was a revelation. The artist transformed herself into a woman of seeming 1001 likenesses, although her expression

never really changes, into a femme fatale, who for almost 10 minutes (9:06 min, to be exact) created the endless flow of mesmerizing movement by filling the screens with her hair with just an almost imperceptible change in the position of her head. It is to be noted that Folstad uses primarily her own body for her video performance and her use of the protagonists as in the

In the present exhibition is rather an exception.

There is a throughout study of Folstad work in the book called Melody of Certain Damaged Melons/Marit Folstad, with an introduction by Christopher Cox and through essays by Robert Morgan, Magnus Haglund and Christopher Borda that offers a thoughtful analyses of Folstad work, as well as a penetrating study of the present exhibition by Lilly Wei in this publication. Therefore I will use the opportunity to concentrate on the subject that first so attracted my attention – the imagery of hair and its recurrence in Folstad's work..

The imagery of hair has a special place in Marit Folstad's work. Formally it conveys beauty of ever changing shapes and movements, conceptually hair becomes a tool for expressing the artist's ideas and opinions about society, art, philosophy and it often address the laws of physics as well. Folstad brings in a painterly aspect through the richness of changing hues that result from particular hair position and the light reflections. Hair appears in Folstad's videos, drawings and traces of its forms permeate sculptural pieces as well.

In video, hair moves as sea waves, with constant but not easily detectable rhythm. It reflects strength as well as femininity and it defines surrounding space. There is a fusion

of hair and air, in another video smoke moves in waves that are reminiscent of those of hair, and water follows the pattern. In works on paper the real hair is often combined with drawn lines to become part of the overall composition. In sculpture the shape of falling strand of hair might dictate the overall form of a piece. Hair is an all-encompassing metaphor for often-contradictory forces, bringing confidence, vulnerability and eroticism into a tentative union. Use of hair and the hair imagery is also associated with Feminist theory since hair is a tool of empowerment. It is so since biblical times and remains so in the contemporary world – in art and society setting alike.

There is a much symbolism associated with hair and its significance in
Whether intended or not Folstad addresses one the prime adornment symbols of power, strength, sexuality and social status. Spanning millennia the magic of hair itself and its imagery figures prominently in history.

Epos of Gilgamesh

From biblical times of Samsom and Deliah imagery of hair was a subject of the

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When revealed that Samson's strength resided in the seven braids of his hair and those were cut off in his sleep, he was subdued and enslaved. His power was gone when his mane was gone. It returned with

And it is when he killed more of his enemies than during his life

The inherent power of hair and its potentially destructive power could hardly be made more obvious than in the coils of snakes enveloping the head of Medusa.

After the complicated multipart and multi god Greek myth the most beautiful of the three Gorgone sisters Medusa turns into the symbol of terror her beautiful hair becoming a veritable snake pit. When ultimately slayed by Perseus, her head becomes a part of the image on the shield of Athena, reasserting her power once again. Beauty, danger, mortality and the resurrection are intertwined within the story and although far from the Folstad video the power of hair is reassessed in Tananore, 2015, a piece where although the young female protagonist is never associated with the destructive powers of Medusa, the fast and often unpredictable swings of hair of long rich hair could become harmful.

The title of the exhibition Marble Index is the name of the haunting Nico's album released in 1969,

Nico whose full name was

She was a singer, songwriter, fashion model

Was discovered by Warhol in London and during the 1960s was one of Warhol's superstars.

Celebrated for her extraordinary beauty she was able to transgress the stereotypes and she created an important musical legacy of her own. Her songs that allow to explore the wide range of her voice and many of her arrangements are presage music we currently call classical contemporary, hence their appeal for artists such as Folstad.

Folstad piece is a three channel video projected on screens mounted within the architectural installation created by the artist for this purpose. The spatial arrangement of the parts radically alters the given gallery space and can very well function as an independent sculptural installation. Often deemed to be one of the mostNico's albums, the Folstad's piece bearing its name has a somber atmosphere. The three protagonists slowly light their cigarettes inhale deeply and exhale the clouds of smoke. The patterns the smoke creates are constantly changing while the smokers remain essentially motionless. Their quiet almost angelic expressions are contrasted by their seeming addiction which totally absorbs them,Smoke creates mesmerizing patterns the magical imagery associated with the fleeting beauty emanating from Aladdin's lamp but we are also reminded by the Aladdin lamp that forces us to think about a painterly streak in many of Folstad's pieces. Although translucent and ever changing, the ... shape of the smoke forces us to meditate on the intricacies of draperies in baroque painting fixed for ever in the picture frame and even more on the sculptural rendition of that very theme carved in wood or stone in innumerable examples.

Nico met her untimely death at age she herself Her untimely death, dying at the age Related to her earlier video *With the Lights Out*, 2008, where the lone male protagonist exudes of smoke of a mysterious origin, there is no cigarette in sight, *The Marble Index* itself explores further the theme of isolation and singlehanded absorption concentration on one task. The to the point of the protagonist's destruction. Inhaling

could be an exhausting task a, we see tears in man's eye at the last frames of the video.

Among earlier examples of Folstad work With the Lights out is an exception (?) she has mostly acted out the video performances herself, while in the Lights out and she becomes a director and a cinematographer. She assumed this role in Marble Index as well as she does in Tananore titled after a mesmerizing song from the Nico's album with the , Folstad sees her role of an

As introducing another material or another technique that of the unconventional theater akin to the early happenings and her role as that of the visual artists involved with early Happenings. She selects the performers She discusses the objectives with the interested performers with the from being a sole protagonist Folstad assumes another role

Nico her full name being

The movement of hair slow and fast

The protagonist is disappearing under the veil of her own hair

Moments of stasis and swirling drama

Person disappears under the curtain of hair only to reappear with a faintest of smile on her lips that lit up her face

The dichotomy of the visible invisible

Becoming Folstad's double

The severity of the image in the in

Marble Index three channel video

Smoke hair

Movement line

rDrawings

Hair is a physiological phenomenon endowed with an almost mythological that spun different interpretations its meaning is

In the past Hair was a signifier of gender , class and social norms and some of it still holds in the rapidly changing world. The simplicity of the hair styles of the old money as opposed to the show off of the nouveau rich, of the .

Gender is even more complicated- while lush, long hair signal femininity , gay and lesbian women opt for shorter and unassuming styles and suspect their sisters with longer hair not to adhere firmly to the lesbian aesthetic and norms.

There is a paradoxical situation where lesbian women accept norms established by men's world adhering to norms of the patriarchal society. In the most of the Mediterranean and Semitic cultures and religions the covering of women's body is a norm recently strengthened by the backlashes against the

In orthodox Judaism and in Islam the covering of hair in public is an essential requirement growing from the deep seated feeling that women are dangerous temptresses using the long lustrous hair as one of the tools of seduction.

Sign of sexuality, femininity and fertility.

There is a duality however the hair should be so long as to cover her body as a shroud a positive aspect of long hair.

Hair is also show of the hair

Length of hair and the hair styles could also signify one position in the society.

Shaving of head is associated with individuals under a strict discipline , soldiers and convicts have hair significantly shorter or completaly shaved heads. Her subservient position is made visible to the whole world bt just

Hair styles could be used as a protest sign against societal norms however as such it is frequently quickly absorbed into the mainstream. In fact the long flowing hair of flower generation of the late 1960's gave rise to the multimillion dolor hair product industry that in turn created new norms and pressures of expectation. Hair styles of liberation from the struictures of society became new restruictive social norms for those

Hair communicates messages about our individuality and adherence to social customs and standarts

It communicates manifold emotions