

Text: Karim Rashid

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“21”

It was a great pleasure to have the opportunity to curate this exhibition at Kunsthal Charlottenborg in Denmark. I thank Bo Nilsson, Claus Peder Pedersen and Peter Holst Henckel to work closely with me to edit all the artists' entries. I have selected in the end 108 pieces from about 1123 entries. I called this show 21 with the hope to receive art from all over Scandinavia that is inspired by this century, be it social, political, spiritual, global or technological in tenet, or a search for new languages, new forms, new materials and future abstractions. As I reviewed the work I noticed some interesting trends from all the myriad of submissions that I received. Almost all the work fit into very similar themes. I broke the show down into more or less 5 sections or visual discourse that blur into one another throughout the exhibition;

1. Objects / sculptures that all seem to be submitted are organic in form, very hand made, very amorphous, almost zoomorphic, and unisexual. Strangely almost all were manifested in white, with obsessions of holes, penetrations, presented in culminations or random groupings. Many of these peculiar pieces speak about the desirous need for literally squeezing, twisting, stacking, distorting, irregular forms as if to say our technological age is too perfect (dipolar to the plutonic sacred geometry of modernism and the sterility of the mass produced object) and hence the artists mutate, create unwieldy growths, multiplications, and viral landscapes.

2. Deconstruction and/or constructing destruction in 2 and 3d collages - I wonder where this comes from? It appears to me like a deliberate need to create heavy montages of chaos, as if the Scandinavian view of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is a disordered world, entropic, and tumultuous. There is a strange obsession with the 'end', the Armageddon, the nocturnal, with decay and voidance of humans present - and within this section of 'decay' we see just barren walls, peeling wallpapers, destroyed homes, or the plain documentation of just banal constructions of frugal chairs in abandoned sites void of life.

3. Then a great deal of entries of textiles and garments - the spirit of deconstructing garments, of irregularity and skewed tailoring, knots, and layers, that are contemporary and very prescient yet put together in ways of appearing old or desecration or tattered remnants. Nature and tailoring are interlaced here but deconstruction is also apparent here. Even a huge sculpture like Grandma's laced underwear xxxxxL or sculptures that are pure organic but have hairs growing from them, or hyper photos of details of our anatomy all play with the theme of random interweaved hair. So this 'abject art' seems key to the notion of textile and weave, the patterns of wall hangings and materials and reflections, speak about urbanity, social and political turmoil.

4. Then there is an obsession with the antiquated Scandinavian 'coziness'. I remember a word in Denmark "hyggeligt", in Norway - "koselig" and in Sweden "mysig" that seems to hinder design. The images of small living spaces, rocking chairs, wood, decoration, quilts, pillows, and blankets - all of the domestic environment, of the old house, of some old notion of comfort in the hinterlands. We see proposals for quilts, and - revisited with a sense of the old craftsmanship but with an investigation of current political and global problems, using images of guns, gas masks, and plain chaos. These cozy memories are juxtaposed with deconstructed architectural space insulations.

5. Then collections of art that readdress and revisits old technologies from tapes cassettes (rendered as paintings) to Nintendo's playing banal messages, from old school light sculptures that randomly and chaotically function, to primitive intentionally low-tech primitive videos. There is a need to discuss and represent the banality of old technology, of wires, plugs, and cables, of the last century saying that these memories can transcend their antiquated ness by moving them into alternative mediums.

Of course there are a few pieces that I just loved that don't quite fit into any of these categories but I guess as a guest curator that is my prerogative - so enjoy - and lets push the limits of art to embrace more our new techno organic shrinking world.