



Tori Wranes / Trolling the Art world

Paulina Brelinska | May 20 2019

Some time ago an unusual sight sparked great interest from the media and confusion among locals, it was caused by strange creatures observed in an island in southern Thailand. It turned out that their creator *Tori Wrånes* was able to transport the Norwegian fantastic fiction even beyond the borders of her country. Although, the vision of trolls playing flute seems almost absurd, especially in the tropics, the performers and the artist have transferred this vision to reality. At the moment Wrånes is one of the most established artistic personalities in Scandinavia. Last year, she was invited to the first edition of the *Thailand Biennale*, which was characterized by the theme: *"Edge of Wonderland"*. She decided to create a live herd of a mysterious species on the island of Krabi. The group of creatures, when spotted, was playing on supposed "historical" instruments at the *Phra Nang cave*. The performance seemed to fall somewhere in between controversial and influential art. The actions are incomprehensible, covered with a mantle of fairytale and dark mystery, but it is thanks to these features that they touch deeply or even evoke extreme emotions.





It is not by coincidence that the work performed at last year's edition of the Biennale in Thailand can be considered very representative of the artist's production. When approaching Tori Wrånes' work one could have the impression that her hidden goal is, in fact, to "troll" the art world. In the mentioned work, random tourists were highly fascinated with the whole performance and the artist herself believes that every human being has a troll inside himself.



Tori Wrånes Portrait ©

Some of the gallery spaces in which she had the opportunity to exhibit her works, for example, the *Zamek Ujazdowski* in Warsaw, were transformed into places marked by magic and modern Nordic symbolism. Interestingly, the ubiquitous trolls on display were even called by the Polish critics one big “*exhibition soaked with evil*”. It is up for debate that her attitude is one that is rather distant from the mechanisms governing the world of art establishment.



Tori Wrånes, *Mom, don't you miss the real me*, 2015, silicon, gel, pigment, wood, cotton tracksuit, trainers, socks. Legs- 62 x 88 x 55 cm, Body- 100 x 70 x 67 cm. Courtesy- Carl Freedman Gallery, London

Wrånes's works are about describing the darkest sides of humanity. Since the artist also has a background in acting, she is able to implement truly surprising scenarios that, she claims, help her with “*rearranging the world to create more freedom*”. This is a particularly important feature in the era of re-evaluating human relationships with other life forms, not only in humanistic theories but also in contemporary art. Because the trolls of the Norwegian myths, according to traditional belief, could inflict damage to people and animals, they were ugly and malicious. Their actual presence in the art world could personify not only the negative qualities of men in general, but also individual professions such as artists, curators or critics (almost like tricksters). The negative characters become a warning, a fairytale moral open to interpretation. Because behind every legend, even the strangest one, there is a grain of truth.



SIRKLING, Tori Wrånes 2017, Photography- Anne Bjorgli



Tori Wrånes *Handmade Acoustics* exhibition view at the Ujazdowski Castle Centre for Contemporary Art, Photo- Pat Mic

The trolls from Norwegian folklore love to collect precious items such as silver or gold, which according to the common interpretation, could symbolize the commercial commodification of art and the need for the artist to stay in the art market. The artist is also regularly perceived in society as a figure with a different sensitivity of reality. Perhaps the creations that Wrånes puts on stage mean nothing more than the personification of the artist figure confronting face to face with the reality outside the art that he embodies. Standing in front of the audience in a bizarre stage outfit which is a kind of protective shell. In this context the performance from the Thai island of Krabi, and the fascination that provoked in so many of the recipients, becomes even more powerful and it could be said that, implicitly, the artist seems even more valuable because of enhancing the otherness.



There is no doubt that Wrånes' trolls carry a huge symbolic meaning and debate in the art circles. Actually, her actions provoke discussion even when engaging with the simplest analysis of her artistic creations.