

PRESS RELEASE

Matias Faldbakken

Abstracts and Pewter Abstracts

February 8 – March 22, 2025

Opening on Friday, February 7, 5 – 8 pm

Waldmannstrasse 6, CH-8001 Zurich

Artist talk and reading of Faldbakken's sixth novel, *Armes Ding*, Friday, February 7, 7.30 pm

Literaturhaus Zürich, Limmatquai 62, CH-8001 Zurich

Galerie Eva Presenhuber is pleased to present *Abstracts and Pewter Abstracts*, its third solo exhibition by the Oslo-based artist and author Matias Faldbakken.

All the works in this show are drawings: on paper, on canvas, and with pewter. And they are all abstract. I've written some sentences to clarify "drawing" and "abstract," but things are not very clear and perhaps there is no other way than to put this in paradoxical terms.

Drawing has a strange essence. A drawing on a white sheet of pricey art paper can diminish the paper's value; it seems easier to discard a piece of paper stained by a lousy drawing than to throw away the untouched sheet — which is straight up violent. On the other hand, a drawing doesn't have to be done to be done. Drawing seems thin, slight, and doesn't have the nasty limitlessness of painting, it doesn't go as "far". Most, if not all, drawing gravitates toward the same level of questionable. Drawing is material image-making pitted against all the other images. Let every drawing be a critique of whatever hangs next to it. Drawing embodies the potency slash impotency of images.

On show is my compulsion to draw, drawn, and my reluctance to draw, drawn. Drawing is empathic denial and the way you draw is deeply embarrassing but it's also yours. You will never draw straight because your hand has a dialect — or is it an accent? The lofty thing about a grown man drawing and the dubious thing about a middle-aged man drawing. A man drawing — an inoperative man.

Drawing might not have much to say about its trauma, the screen, but it's still an antagonist in a screen climate. Drawing is a technology that hasn't been updated. Charcoal on paper and ink on paper and pencil on paper has always looked like that. Radical charcoal. Beaten ink. A weakening image machine. Drawing has this troublesome, shallow, slow, scratchy, mute, warm, pale space in it that the screen doesn't have. Drawing refuses to be fresh. Every pixel wants something from you but paper is not electric, it's dead. Graphite is dead. *Gesso ist tot*. Drawing is satisfaction through the use of tools that are least controlled by others. Drawing is the original artistic impulse and the smartest and most clueless move is to go back to that. There's an old saying among metal heads about heavy metal that I sometimes paraphrase and lend to drawing: drawing is ridiculous but we know that going in.

When I don't draw, I write. As long as I write, drawing belongs to the fluid universe of not-writing. Drawing: a steady, yearlong execution of something that is not writing. Text allows me to bring joy to people with my concerns, drawing allows me to snatch it back. I draw against readability.

I write themes, I don't draw themes. Text is politics, drawing is some form of everted politics and a more abstract attitude. When I say abstract I don't mean abstract, I mean abstract. Abstract is not an eight letter word.

I'm an abstract artist, an abstractionist, and abstract must mean abstracted from something and here abstraction means abstracted away from story. There is no story. Abstraction means halting the monsters of narration.

GALERIE EVA PRESENHUBER

Reticence and disagreement shows itself to me in abstract forms. What forms? A man can dream and sometimes he dreams about panicky abstraction. Defeatist abstraction. Adversarial abstraction. A search for an abstraction more linked to well-well-well, to eh-hh, to skaz, a nervescape, indebtedness, to one of those nightmarish reversals and to *when-I'm-not-so-sure-about-that-becomes-form*. All of the above rather than eyeball solutions, relevant painterly design or strategized weirdness.

The idea of abstraction is bigger than the abstract thing, hence all the disappointment. Abstraction is a form of frustration and Wilhelm Worringer has a quote from 1908 that I like: "The urge to abstraction, is the outcome of a great inner unrest inspired in man by the phenomena of the outer world."

Drawing is a way to abstract. It's also a way to act. When you act you err, said Hegel. So here is an act which can't be rationalized but still demands to be undertaken. And there you are, abstracting away, funeral by funeral.

Matias Faldbakken

Matias Faldbakken was born in 1973 in Hobro, Denmark. He lives and works in Oslo. His work is represented in major museums and private collections worldwide, including Astrup Fearnley Museum of Modern Art, Oslo, NO; National Museum of Art, Design and Architecture, Oslo, NO; Telenor Art Collection, Oslo, NO; in der Speyer Family Collection, New York, NY, US. Recent exhibitions include *Form Matters, Matter Forms. Vom Readymade zum Warenfetisch*, Kunst Museum Winterthur, CH (2024); *Before Tomorrow – Astrup Fearnley Museet 30 Years*, Astrup Fearnley Museet, Oslo, NO (2023); *Lorck Schive Kunstpris*, Trondheim Kunstmuseum, Trondheim, NO (2021); *Effects of Good Government in the Pit*, Astrup Fearnley Museet, Oslo, NO (2017); *Beyond Borders*, Beaufort Triennial 2015: *Beyond Borders*, Schore, BE (2015); *Fuel Sculpture*, Art Altstetten Albisrieden, Vulkanplatz, Zurich, CH (2015); *Le Consortium*, Dijon, FR (2013); *Intervention #21 – Matias Faldbakken*, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, NL (2012); *Portrait Portrait of a a Generation Generation*, WIELS, Centre d'art contemporaine, Brussels, BEL (2012); *Oslo, Texas*, The Power Station, Dallas, TX, US (2011); *That Death of Which One Does Not Die*, Kunsthalle Friedricianum, Kassel, DE (2010).

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