

Messages from Heaven, 1997. From This is MOST important series.
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DAG ALVENG

Dag Alveng (b. 1953 in Oslo, Norway) studied at the Trent Polytechnic in England. Upon his return to Norway in 1976, he found that there 'was nothing much going on' and with few friends started The Photogallery - the first in Scandinavia dedicated purely to photography. 'We wanted to bring important work to Norway, and showed people like Diane Arbus, Edward Weston and other contemporary work. We paid the rent ourselves and worked for free as we did not sell much.'



'It took an international acclaim to get a recognition in Norway. If you live in Norway, you really have to work hard to get your work out there...'

MY GENERATION of photographers/artists had to make a living by doing commercial work. There was no market whatsoever. Now several photographers and artists live well-off doing their artwork.' One of Alveng's jobs at this time was working as a night guard at an asylum but he didn't waste any time, taking many photographs there, not of people, but of the stern environment.

The series *Summer Light*, which he started in 1979, transcribes the abundance of summer light and the coolness and soothing qualities of the nature. 'The countryside and the locations in *Summer Light* are places with peace and quiet. In this situation, there's no hurry, and it's all about a frame of mind, being focused and relaxed at the same time.' Here, Alveng combined two approaches - one of a meditative, religious method as formulated in a book *Octave of Prayers* by a fellow photographer Minor White; and Walker Evans' eager interest in depiction of the world. 'They have both been extremely influential in the world of photography, and I owe something to both of them', he confirms.

In the early 1990s, Alveng started experimenting with multi-exposure, finding the first results simply 'stunning'. *This is MOST important* series is made with a hand-held 4x5 camera and double exposure of the negative. The title refers to a small note which appears in one of the pictures and was given to Alveng by an elderly man 'with a message and a mission'. In *I Love this Time of Year*, each scene is photographed four times, turning the camera by 90 degrees on each occasion. He used Polaroid film here to help him 'find the exposure'. The city elements and its inhabitants are mixed into one, almost abstract, image. 'These photographs are mainly about time and space where spaces are translated into patterns, and time exists in layers in one and the same picture'. 'Photographing in the city is more of a hunting experience, finding the place, tracking the motive. In the city, there is noise and chaos, but I still have to be in a certain state of mind, going along with the flow, being a part of it.'

Alveng's works are currently at a major photography exhibition at The Yale University Art Gallery, alongside Robert Frank, Ansel Adams, Walker Evans, Lee Friedlander and others. Have any of these classics of photography influenced his work? 'In addition to doing straight photographs, I have done conceptual work, installations, video and performance. My influences are many, but to mention a few: Marcel Duchamp, James Turrell, Bill Viola, Gerhard Richter; and within photography: Harry Callahan, Ray Metzker, Robert Frank. As for contemporary colleagues, I especially appreciate the work of my friend, Judith Joy Ross, and Phillip-Lorca DiCorsia.'

Alveng's photographs are in many collections around the world, such as The Yale University Art Gallery, The Met, New York, MoMA, New York and the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam.



This year, Caixa de Economia Galeria da Paulista in Sao Paulo, in cooperation with the Norwegian Consulate in Brazil, will host a larger retrospective exhibition of over hundred of works from his thirty-year long career.

Was it difficult for a Norwegian artist to make contacts abroad? 'Yes, and no,' says Alveng. New York's Metropolitan Museum and MoMA

both wanted to have his work as soon as he showed it to them in 1982. 'I was delighted. In Norway, I felt very much like an outsider at the time. For some reason, my work was considered very provocative and the reviews were all extremely negative. I had no support outside a small group of hardcore enthusiasts and artists.' In 1991, the gallerist, Holly Solomon, offered him a show in NYC. 'For

me it took an international acclaim to get a recognition in Norway. If you live in Norway, you really have to work hard to get your work out there. It's difficult, but I believe that it's getting easier and quite a number of Norwegian artists are now showing abroad.'

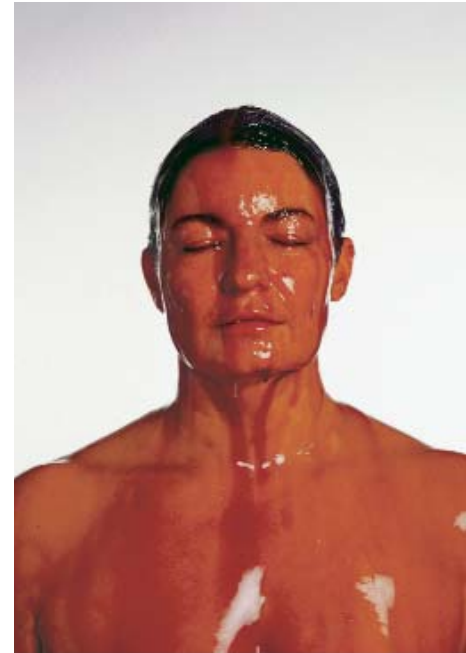
There is a new project under wraps which reflects Alveng's recently acquired passion. With

Inge Torsdalen and Øyvind Hansen, he's built a racing car, and is 'competing as a racing driver'. 'This will be the source of a new show I am working on, involving video, sculpture, photography, installation and performance. I've been working on this project for eight years and I can't wait to get it on the road, so to speak...'

www.alveng.com



Above: *Strapchair*, 1980 From *Asylum* series Below right: *Electric fence*, 1997 From *Summer Light* series Below left: *I Love This Time of Year*, 2003 From *I Love This Time of Year* series ©Dag Alveng/Courtesy Deborah Bell Gallery



Above: *Passing*, 2004 C-print diasec

HELI REKULA

Heli Rekula (b. 1963 in Helsinki, Finland), currently a PhD student at The Academy of Fine Arts in Helsinki, is one of the internationally recognised stars of the Finnish art scene. In 2001, she exhibited at the Venice Biennale, in the exhibition curated by Harald Szeemann. Her works also appeared at Odapark Foundation in Netherlands, The Museum of Russian Art in Russia, Örebro Konsthall in Sweden, Museo del Barrio in the United States and Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo in Spain. In 2002, she was awarded the Ars Fennica prize, followed by the prestigious Finnish state photography prize in 2005.

REKULA's main theme is the female body, both the power of its beauty and its cultural and personal limitations. Her early series (*Pilgrimage*, 1998) comprising of photographs and a video, caused quite a stir. The first impression of innocent and angel-like looking women (she used professional fashion models) contradicted their horrific, mysterious bleeding marks. 'The blood is a sign of life and humanity within', says Rekula. 'There is a bigger question in these works for me,' she says. 'The young woman in the photographs



'one can be so easily seduced with the "imitation of life" that one does lose nuances...'

is self-evidently posing for the camera. She has positioned herself trustfully in front of the viewer. The title of the prologue in the video is *The Fantasy of Devotion*, so these works are also laying out a question if it is possible to devote oneself to someone else, be it another human being or God.'

In more recent works, she pours liquids over her models, covers them with feathers (*Passing*, 2004) or stages narrative scenarios (*Desiré* or *...I just don't know what to do with myself*, 1999). In 2006, she photographed a naked woman in a various settings, including a beige padded room reminiscent of the asylum environment. The intimacy and privacy of the padded background is meant to contrast with the suggestive title of the series - *Stage*.

What is her working process? 'An inexplicable, vague feeling, a skein of thoughts and