



PRESS INVITATION

13 October 2020

ESBEN WEILE KJÆR
HARDCORE FREEDOM
23.10. – 30.12.2020

Tinkerbelle, stripper pole and electronic beats at Copenhagen Contemporary

The up-and-coming young artist Esben Weile Kjær zooms in on his own generation and explores its narratives in this large performance-based exhibition created specially for Copenhagen Contemporary (CC). Using architecture, electronic beats, light shows, mirrors, and live performances as leverage, Weile Kjær presents a unified work which explores the relationship between youth, rebellion, partying, cultural consumption, and the engineered sense of freedom that young people subscribe to. *HARDCORE FREEDOM* can be experienced from 23 October 2020.

Tinkerbelle made in neon

Between rubble and old building materials rises a glistening white-painted plateau with mirrored floors. A monumental neon sculpture of the classic Disney character Tinkerbelle illuminates the scene; a stripper pole is installed in the centre of the plateau and, along the walls, practice bars of the type used by ballet dancers. The back wall of the exhibition space is clad in textiles, forming a colourful backcloth, and the lighting in the space raises associations to rhythmic nightclub lighting. An LED screen is floating in the semi-darkness like a mirror on a wall, showing an earlier performance staged in the very same room.

HARDCORE FREEDOM is continually activated for the duration of the exhibition in performance series lasting two hours. The space comes alive with contrasting dance styles ranging from the uncontrollable dancing by nightclub guests and sexualised gestures of strippers to the bodily discipline of ballet dancers. The performance treads a narrow path between party and rebellion where elements are shifted, changed, erected, or demolished, thus changing the character of the exhibition with each performance.

On the borderline between nightclub and art institution

With *HARDCORE FREEDOM*, Esben Weile Kjær has created a hybrid space blurring the boundaries between nightclub, art institution, stage, and fashion boutique. The exhibition thus emulates the experience economy which, by means of architecture, scenography, and dramaturgy, specialises in providing paying guests a temporary sense of freedom and identity.

The price of freedom

With his art, Esben Weile Kjær frames a generation, in the Western world characterised by a hitherto unprecedented freedom of choice in practically all aspects of life: identity, affiliation, education, gender, social circle, media flows, religion, body, movement, and cultural experiences. Using individualism as a compass and self-realisation as motivation, millennials mix and remix their identity. The whole world is within reach of every individual – that goes for the freedom to choose, but equally the personal responsibility and expectations placed on individuals that come with it. A generation which, in tandem with – and perhaps partly due to – its freedom now suffers appreciably from mental conditions such as anxiety and depression.

With strategies borrowed from the experience economy, *HARDCORE FREEDOM* unravels and challenges themes which millennials master to a tee: anxiety, exhibitionism, 90s nostalgia, sampling of symbols, *FOMO* (fear of missing out), individualism, achievement, digital self-invention, cultural consumption as identity marker, and contemporary commercial narratives about freedom, youth, and sex.

The exhibition themes are reinforced in light of COVID-19, which has created a new social reality for young people and others and for performance art. *HARDCORE FREEDOM* zooms in on the artist's own generation, casting an inquisitive and critical eye on its ideals and flip sides.

HARDCORE FREEDOM is presented in a special partnership with Kunstforeningen GL STRAND which showed the exhibition *POWER PLAY* by the same artist from August-October. With themes like nightclubbing, pop culture, and authorities, Esben Weile Kjær began his artistic exploration, which is now presented in a further developed, performative grand finale at Copenhagen Contemporary.

The exhibition has received generous support from

Det Obelske Familiefond
Anonymous foundation
Beckett Fonden
Danlas
SOUNDBOKS
Ganni
KVADRAT
Danlas

HARDCORE FREEDOM is part of Copenhagen Contemporary's exhibition series Future First, which presents art created by renowned young, Danish talents with an international outlook. Future First is realized thanks to support from The Obel Family Foundation.

Press contact

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Invitation to press viewing – including a special surprise

You are invited to attend the exclusive press viewing on 22 October at 17.15. Few places only on a first come first served basis. To ensure a spot, reply to lineglavind@cphco.org as soon as possible and **no later than 20 October at 12.00.**

Program

17.15: Arrival in CC's foyer

17.25: Welcome by Marie Nipper, director

17.35: Introduction by Esben Weile Kjær

18.00: Explore the exhibition on your own

18.30: Performance including a special surprise (approx. two hours)

20.30: Thank you and good night

Please note: Due to COVID-19 restrictions, only a certain number of guests are allowed inside the hall at one time. Consequently, new guests are let in when someone leaves and you may not, therefore, be allowed back in if you leave the performance halfway through.

Download press material here: www.copenhagencontemporary.org/en/press
The folder is updated again on 23 October.

CC is kindly supported by:

Augustinus Fonden, Aage og Johanne Louis-Hansens Fond, Anonymous Fund, Private donation, Ole Kirk's Fond, The City of Copenhagen, Spar Nord Fonden, Knud Højgaards Fond, Salling Fondene, Beckett-Fonden, Den Danske Forskningsfond, Den Obelske Familiefond, Foreningen Roskilde Festival, Ministry of Culture, Danish Arts Foundation, Elsass Fonden, Sportgoods Fonden, Refshaleøens Ejendomsselskab A/S, Fredericia Furniture, Ege and Ferm Living.

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