



PRESS INVITATION

21.04.2021

## Forever on the move

# Lilabeth Cuenca Rasmussen opens major exhibition at Copenhagen Contemporary

Lilabeth Cuenca Rasmussen has created the timely exhibition *I am not what you see* specifically for Copenhagen Contemporary (CC), examining nomadic life, ethnicity, and identity. Four monumental sculptures, each bearing a different name and, in their various ways, hybrids of architecture, costumes, and dwellings. They are activated by the performance, *Cocktails*, where performers both populate and wear the sculptures.

Cuenca Rasmussen's exhibition zooms in on the ability of nomads to carry their home wherever they go, crossing boundaries, parts of the world, cultures, and social conditions.

The artist has been working with these themes since the beginning of her artistic practice and *I am not what you see*, one of her largest exhibitions to date, manifests this examination using the leverage offered by both installation and performance.

HALL 5

**Lilabeth Cuenca Rasmussen**

*I am not what you see*

29 April – 5 September 2021

In a globalised world, the nomadic state is not necessarily so very distant. Conversely, the pandemic has challenged the basic conditions of nomads and, in many ways, had fatal consequences for migrants and refugees, for example, who have been stopped and prevented from crossing borders.

With her exhibition *I am not what you see*, Lilabeth Cuenca Rasmussen poses questions about the nomadic condition: who is today's nomad and where do they belong? What kinds of ideas and genetics do we carry with us? Who are you if – like the artist – you have a dual ethnic identity, calling two or more countries, parts of the world, and cultures your home and upholding their traditions? Rather than reducing each other to simple and unambiguous categories like man, woman, Asian or European, artist or whatever, Lilabeth Cuenca Rasmussen asks you to reflect on everything that lies behind.

**Copenhagen Contemporary**

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The four sculptures in the exhibition: *Iris*, *Miss Fabula*, *Fatamorgana*, and *Quadripoint* are created from very different materials: straw, airmail envelopes, quilts, and textiles. Common to them all is that they each replicate a type of dwelling, thereby recalling distant destinations with designs referencing different iconic nomadic dwellings: a *rondavel*, an igloo, a hammock, and a tipi.

However, there is more to them than meets the eye – as indicated by the exhibition title: the sculptures double as a hat, a skirt, dresses, jackets, and a shirt, respectively. Their hybrid form spanning sculpture, dwelling type, and costume challenges people's stereotype ideas about each other and their surroundings.

The nomad is characterised by not owning land, reflected in the lightness of the sculptures and their inherent mobile and transformative capacity. The nomadic freedom and changeability can be explored by entering the sculptures – 'putting on' their identities, like a piece of clothing.

### **The four hybrids**

*Iris* is inspired by an African dwelling called a *rondavel*; a circular dwelling built of local materials and usually topped by a thatched roof. The sculpture, doubling as a hat, has the appearance of being movable and easy to bring along with you, but it is anchored in the gallery space with poles inspired by traditional South Asian stilt houses. Several national craft traditions are combined in this work, as thatching was formerly a traditional roof type in Denmark.

*Miss Fabula* also appears airy and light in her white paper-thin skirt construction. A closer look at the material reveals that the sculpture is made of thousands of airmail envelopes sewn to a blue steel frame with very thin white thread. In shape and colour, the sculpture references an igloo, already a very fragile type of dwelling due to the climate crisis. Like the melting ice, the slow and personal communication by means of airmail is also gradually disappearing.

Suspended from the trusses of the roof is *Fatamorgana* whose title references a special natural phenomenon only experienced by few people. The quilting material is airy and floating, recalling hammocks and a nomadic people in Amazonas sleeping in trees. The quilt clouds embody a function as clothing, as they, besides being hammocks, can double as dresses and jackets used for the exhibition performances.

The largest work in physical terms is *Quadripoint*, reminiscent of a tipi. The gossamer-thin white fabric of the sculpture, stretched between floor and ceiling, is anchored to the floor by ten heavy coral stones. A fragmented shirt is divided between the tripartite fabric. Besides dissolving its own shape, *Quadripoint* is able to transform the gallery space completely when the thin fabric is used as a backcloth and border during the performance. The title *Quadripoint* references both a place in the USA where four borders meet and the Earth's tectonic plates which, like the work, are mobile.

## Performance

*Cocktails* is a cross-aesthetic performance work which will be performed in the exhibition. Each sculpture is populated and worn by various performers. Iris is linked to the prince of roller-skating, Christian Dehn Frandsen, *Miss Fabula* is populated by the flautist Karolina Leedo, and *Quadripoint* by the percussionist Tira Skamby. The dancers Mia Kingo, Liva Xamanek, Emma Annfeldt, and Sofie Mark Wegener will set *Fatamorgana* moving along with the artist, who will be reciting her text. The performers work basically on an individual basis, but during the performance, they blend into a single cocktail.

## Biography

Lilibeth Cuenca Rasmussen (b.1970) is a performance and visual artist who, throughout her career, has evolved a definite cross-aesthetic expression. Text and other mechanisms such as music, costumes, and a stringent scenography play a significant role in her narratives. Adopting a critical and humorous approach, she asks questions about ethnicity, identity, gender, social relations, and affiliation. Many of these themes reflect Cuenca Rasmussen's dual nationality with her Filipino mother and Danish father, making her artistic practice distinct, since she points to several cultures simultaneously and, through her art, defines a third position: creating her own home in and with the artwork to take with her wherever she goes.

### **This exhibition is supported by**

Minister Erna Hamiltons Legat  
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### **Download pressemateriale her:**

<https://copenhagencontemporary.org/presse/>

### **Invitation to press preview on 29 April at 10–11.**

Before opening the doors to the public, there will be a press preview of *I am not what you see* where the artist will give an introduction and a special performance. To mark the occasion, CC serves a light refreshment.

### **For registration and more information, please contact:**

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