

GALERIE MARIA LUND

NICOLAI HOWALT & ESBEN KLEMANN

de travers

photo - sculpture - installation

7. 11. 2017 - 6. 01.2018

*The assistant looked at me with an amused, vaguely ironic expression: better not do than do, better to meditate than to act, better his astrophysics, the threshold of the Unknowable, than my chemistry, a mess compounded of stenches, explosions, and small futile mysteries.*  
Primo Levi: *The Periodic Table, Potassium* - Ed. Schocken Books, 1984

Nicolai Howalt practices a concrete abstraction, an enlarged reality that most often starts with elements of nature to seize less visible dimensions of our existence. Esben Klemann questions matters and forms in a fun and innovative approach - going against established concepts. With *de travers (sideways)*, the two artists have entered a dialog by taking possession of the gallery space in an unusual way.

The exploration of the fundamental structures and essential components of images (grain, pixels, frames) linked to a very open creative process is at the heart of photographer Nicolai Howalt's and artist Esben Klemann's approach. Nicolai Howalt questions notions of life and death (*Endings*, 2011), sunlight, as a source of healing and as the very origin of photography (*Light Break*, 2015-2017). Most recently he explored the fundamentals - of metals and chemistry - in order to make them visible, to set a form of portrait in interaction with the photographic process and matter (*Elements*, 2016-2017). This quest is an attempt to see and to put in perspective human life in the world, especially transitions between different states. Thus, Nicolai Howalt's work lies at the crossroads of science, documentary photography and art. Esben Klemann is fascinated by lines and grids as neutral shapes and sees them as fundamental components. He brings thin grids of clay into play, to challenge the limits of ceramic matter, unsettles it by creating tension or by jolting it in a never-ending discovery process. Like a musician who composes and recomposes with the same chords - here clay, dry clay, firing and enamel. Along with the experimentations with clay, he develops a monumental sculptural work in plaster or cast concrete - always dominated by the line, which he lets

wave in surprising shapes, recalling in places the process of 'a drunken geology'. His highly playful approach - Esben Klemann claims the refusal of boredom and the desire for play value as his initial motivations - can be seen in his drawings and animated cartoons: They are intriguing openings on his work process and the testimony of an assertive and very personal aesthetic where the line, the coming of the shape and the incessant metamorphosis takes us to a captivating chaos.

With *de travers* Nicolai Howalt and Esben Klemann wanted to make their respective fascinations dialog together, while challenging each other, by turning the common artistic practices *upside down*. Thus, Howalt the photographer took possession of the floor while Klemann the sculptor took the walls and the empty space: the stoneware "grids" subtly respond to the photographs of frail weavings, works of an invisible moth. A monumental sculpture *in situ* establishes a connection while forcing a distance, and the observation of a sulphur crystal declined in 12 photo variations - the result of chance and a chemical reaction - is somewhat reminiscent of an alchemist's dream. To be continued...

## background

Presented for the first time at the Galerie Maria Lund in 2015, the work of Danish photographer NICOLAI HOWALT (born in 1970, lives in Denmark) has been largely exhibited in Scandinavia, Europe and the United States and has received awards by numerous prestigious institutions (*Hasselblad Foundation, Danish Arts Foundation* etc.). In Paris, the Maison du Danemark (House of Denmark) welcomed his exhibition *How to hunt* (series made with Trine Søndergaard) in 2012. In France his photographs are part of the *Hermès* collection and the *Maison Européenne de la Photographie*.

ESBEN KLEMANN (born in 1972, lives in Denmark) has mostly exhibited in his native Denmark, in institutions (*Charlottenborg, Bornholms Kunstmuseum, Vejen Kunstmuseum, Danmarks Keramikmuseum*), in galleries and the public space. In 2013 he was invited, by the city of Vejen, to install 14 concrete sculptures in the public space (*EGNSBETON* project). The Galerie Maria Lund first exhibited his work in 2013 in the show *Terres- Copenhagen Ceramics Invites (Nouvelle vague - Palais de Tokyo-CPGA)*. The following year, *Chaotiquement vôtre (Chaotically yours)* (with Pernille Pontoppidan Pedersen) brought together an ensemble of his sculptures as well as a video, and in 2016 his drawings and reliefs were presented in *Traits d'un abri (Outlining a shelter)*. Recently a selection of his sculptures was part of the 19<sup>th</sup> edition of the *Biennale internationale de céramique, Châteauroux. (International ceramics biannual of Châteauroux)*. Esben Klemann's work is featured in numerous notorious collections in Denmark, such as the National Art Collections Fund. This year, he was commissioned three works for the public space.

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