

Shadows in ruins / How to Proceed?

Sofie Hviid Vinther / Marit Helen Akslen

Galleri Salhus March 1st – April 19th 2026

In the exhibitions *Shadows in ruins* and *How to Proceed?*, artists Sofie Hviid Vinther and Marit Helen Akslen touch on very relevant issues of our time. We stand in a room with works representing two fearless voices. Voices that are clearly political in their criticism of our time.

In the exhibition *Shadows in ruins*, Sofie Hviid Vinther takes us into work, routine, repetitive work tasks, where the body is almost like an extended part of the machines; - and performs the same work in the same way over and over again. Day after day, week after week, year after year. A finely tuned machinery and finely tuned collaboration between man and machine.

Before industrialization, when people worked the land and kept animals, people had hard physical work and little spare time, yet they had varied work both throughout the day and in relation to the seasons. Overall, the work was clearly meaningful as cultivating the land and raising animals provided raw materials for processing and food for the table, and the connection between all the work tasks was easy to see. The farmer was concerned with frugality and sustainability and had an awareness of how one could/should manage natural resources.

In the industrialized world, workers were given defined work tasks and working hours as well as spare time, but they had tedious work and only produced a small part of the final product. The worker is just a small piece in a large puzzle, and despite receiving payment for the work, that put food on the table, the work could feel meaningless and monotonous.

Sofie Hviid Vinther examines many aspects of work/labour in her artistic practice. For example, simple, repetitive work tasks can feel safe and give a sense of mastery. One can feel community with colleagues, and one can feel a shared pride in the production work as a team. One builds identity and personal character through routine, discipline, taking care of one's share of responsibility, etc. When everyone does as they are supposed to, products in boxes with labels will almost magically appear at the end of the production line. Industrialization led to increased production and consumption, and profitability was important. Costs had to be kept low, production had to yield a return, one had to keep up with the times/developments, renew/upgrade machinery, etc. The work could be dangerous/harmful to health due to chemicals, dust, noise and machines in operation. Increased consumption → increased production → increased emissions. The textile industry is one of the most polluting industries in the world. The fact that Norway had laws, regulations and trade unions that ensured collective agreements etc. made us less competitive in the competition with the Asian market.

The question is whether accepting that production will take place in countries with weaker laws and regulations is the solution? To keep prices down, we accept that our clothes are produced by workers with completely different working conditions than we would accept if they were produced in Norway. Work in the textile industry in Asia rarely provides a living wage, and often involves risks to life and health, as well as job protection that is weak or non-existent. This is a truth that is often hidden/invisible from the Western consumer in search of fashionable clothes.

Sofie Hviid Vinther (b.1994) graduated from the Bergen Academy of Fine Arts in 2021. She works with installation, textiles, performance, text and publications. The industrial and repetitive are close to her work both visually and in terms of content. Vinther has had several solo exhibitions since graduating, has been purchased for KODE art museum, and we are so proud to be able to show her work at Galleri Salhus.

<https://sofiehviidvinther.com/>

Textiles are something we all have a relationship to. We have them next to our skin 24/7, year-round, from the time we are born until we die. What we wear depends on temperature, mood, finances and availability. Some places might have a shortage of clothing, despite the fact that we know that we have an enormous overproduction of clothing.

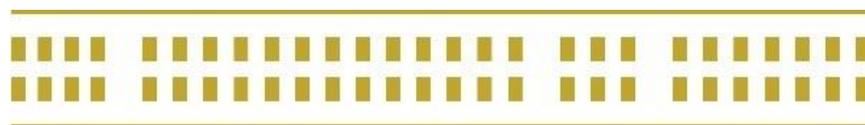
In her artistic practice, Marit Helen Akslen has focused on social inequality, power and abuse of power, tensions and changes within ecology, economics and migration. Through this, she shows us the complexity of our coexistence on earth, and our impact on nature and the environment. Growing up on a farm in Ålesund has given her respect and understanding for the interaction of nature and the resources we surround ourselves with.

Repetitive shapes and patterns are a recurring tool in Akslen's (and Hviid Vinther's) works. In this way, she highlights both the time spent and the manual work that lies behind all textile production. In several of her works, Akslen points to structural social problems such as overconsumption, production conditions and sustainability. In her artistic practice, she has also focused on the hierarchy of working life, and in society in general. Who decides what and who has value? There is war, poverty and misery in the world. Time and time again, people with power place themselves above others and above the law.

In this exhibition, there is not *one* intrusive image or situation that makes Akslen feel the need to ask questions and criticize. There are many. It is everything at once, and that perhaps makes this exhibition more all-encompassing and existential. We, that is, humanity, find ourselves in a precarious situation. We live in a very troubled world view, where everything is uncertain and everything feels out of control. A lot looks bleak and hopeless. We see misery, suffering, pain and loss, ...and the title *How to Proceed?* Asks us: How do we move on from where we are now? Can we find traces of light, of hope, that there must be a future for the children being born, and for life on earth?

Marit Helen Akslen (b.1971) graduated from the Bergen Academy of Fine Arts in 2000. She explores the coexistence of humans with their surroundings and their impact on nature. Her artistic practice is founded on a consistent political and feminist commitment, where she observes, portrays and criticizes contemporary topics through her work. Akslen was among the last to be awarded the State Guaranteed Income for Artists (GI) in 2012 before the scheme was discontinued. She has exhibited both at home and abroad, has been purchased by a number of public collections, and it is a great privilege for us to show her work at Galleri Salhus.

<https://akslen.net/>



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