

***INTIMATED  
STRUCTURES***

## **EXHIBITION**

Rita Marhaug  
Vegard Ekberg  
Lars Korff Lofthus  
Gro Gj. N. De-Martine  
Ingvild Melberg Eikeland  
*Exhibitors*

Jane Sverdrupsen  
*Curator*

María Elena Ditrén  
Juan Carlos Ditrén  
Jane Sverdrupsen  
*Coordination*

Marianne de Tolentino  
Belkis & Tormod Gundersen  
*Collaboration*

## **CATALOGUE**

Jane Sverdrupsen  
*Curatorial text*

Rita Marhaug  
Vegard Ekberg  
Lars Korff Lofthus  
Gro Gj. N. De-Martine  
Ingvild Melberg Eikeland  
*Artist texts*

Jane Sverdrupsen  
*Graphic Design*

**2023**

# *INTIMATED STRUCTURES*

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# CURATORIAL APPROACH

When something is *intimated*, it is communicated indirectly, as a hint. It can also mean to make something known, formally or publicly. The word intimate also pertains to that which is private, close, and essential to human nature.<sup>1</sup>

## The human organism

A human being, a physical organism with its myriad of systems and processes, is a small part of the natural world which possesses a unique awareness of its physical surroundings. Yet, the true essence of the human being is revealed in the profound connections it forges through intimate relationships with other individuals. These connections provide emotional sustenance, offer a sense of belonging, and ignite the deepest human emotions—love, compassion, and empathy. Humans seek and thrive on these bonds, which shape our perceptions of our self and the world. As the physical organism grows and evolves, so do these relationships. They adapt to changing circumstances, mature with time, and withstand the trials of life. The ebb and flow of human relationships reflect the essence of being—an organism driven not only by biological instincts but also by the profound need for emotional connection and companionship. The ability to form and develop intimate connections is a testament to humanity's capacity to leave a legacy of love that transcends physical existence.

## The Norwegian state and identity politics

The interpersonal relationships individuals form with each other are continuously affected by the societal framework in which they exist. These intimate processes happen in every culture, with a varying degree of governmental influence. How does this play out in Norwegian society,

<sup>1</sup> [\\*www.thefreedictionary.com/intimated](http://www.thefreedictionary.com/intimated)

which is heavily regulated but simultaneously allows for substantial freedom of expression?

Norway is considered one of the world's most gender equal societies, with the fight for gender equality of the feminist movement of the 1970s having made an important contribution to the achievement of this status. It is also considered to be one of the more progressive and LGBTQIA+<sup>2</sup>-friendly countries in the world.

*“The Government’s equality policy seeks to eliminate barriers which prevent women and men from exercising their freedom of choice. Women and men must have equal opportunities and rights, and society must enable girls and boys, women and men to make the most of their opportunities.”<sup>3</sup>*

Those are the words of the Norwegian government’s Ministry of Culture as it intimates its strategy for the nation’s gender equality efforts. It is built upon a belief that a non-discriminatory society is a prerequisite for equality and equal opportunities. Robust, clear legislation is employed to prevent discrimination based on gender and to provide effective legal protection. Authorities have a duty to actively engage in efforts to promote equality in all sectors of society, both public and private.

The population’s trust in the purpose and structure of the Norwegian welfare state enables this legislation and has resulted in one of the highest levels of gender equality of any country in the world (84.2%). Nevertheless, full gender equality has not yet been accomplished in Norway. There are factors preventing this gap from being completely closed. The most important ones are cultural norms.

<sup>2</sup> lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex, asexual, and more

<sup>3</sup> [www.regjeringen.no/en/topics/equality-and-social-inclusion/likestilling-og-inkludering/gender-equality/id670481/](http://www.regjeringen.no/en/topics/equality-and-social-inclusion/likestilling-og-inkludering/gender-equality/id670481/)

There is great freedom of choice in Norway, and the public education system is free. Yet, the majority of the population still choose their professions gender-conservatively. This is visible in the gender pay gap, as professions with a high percentage of female workers pay less. Women are far more likely to work part-time, and there are far more men in the private sector, where wages are higher.<sup>4</sup> Women still do most of the housework and more often drop out of the workforce due to illness. This gender-segregated workforce also caused women and men to be affected in different ways by the Covid-19 pandemic.

*“Since women predominate in the health and education sectors, in both of which they work in direct contact with people, they have been more exposed to infection than workers in other sectors, such as industry, in which men predominate (...) Furthermore, during the pandemic, women have taken on the main burden of childcare and housework. This pattern gives reason to ask whether traditional gender roles are re-emerging.”*

Mari Teigen,

Director of CORE – Centre for Research on Gender Equality

Is this indicative of a situation where traditional gender roles are gradually getting a stronger foothold in Norwegian culture? If so, how does this impact contemporary relationships and the part of the population who do not identify with the cisgender heterosexual dynamic?

The LGBTQIA+ community in Norway has made significant strides in terms of legal rights and societal acceptance during the last five decades. Norwegian society, including both the general population and the government, is generally inclusive and accepting of LGBTQIA+ individuals. The government has a ‘hands on’ approach to the current discourse in Norway regarding gender identity through its Ministry of

<sup>4</sup> [www.ssb.no/befolkning/faktaside/likestilling](http://www.ssb.no/befolkning/faktaside/likestilling)

Culture and Equality. The Ministry’s *Action Plan for Gender and Sexuality Diversity*<sup>5</sup> released in 2023 comprises 49 measures aimed at protecting the rights and improving the quality of life of LGBTQIA+ people and increasing recognition of gender and sexual diversity in Norwegian society.

Despite the progress made in minimizing discrimination towards this part of the population, intersectional<sup>6</sup> challenges and discrimination persist in Norway for members of the growing LGBTQIA+ community, as do hate crimes, even including murder.

## The exhibition

Visual artists can express cultural impacts on the perception of one’s own identity, sexuality, and relationships in a way that resonates across languages and cultures. Their artistic expression moves beyond the written word in a multifaceted visual language to communicate these intimate human experiences. Works of art can therefore provide a deeper and more nuanced insight into what it means to be human, both as a cultural and as a physical being. Artists, by delving into the complexity of gender discourse, might be able to foster societal change through awareness and empathy.

In the exhibition “Intimated Structures”, Rogaland Kunstsenter presents artworks by five Norwegian artists. They are Rita Marhaug, Vegard Ekberg, Lars Korff Lofthus, Gro Gj. N. De-Martine and Ingvild Melberg Eikeland. All the artists have their homes and artistic practices in various locations across Western Norway. Through their art they investigate how cultural heritage, and contemporary society, influences how they relate to their

<sup>5</sup> [www.regjeringen.no/en/aktuelt/the-norwegian-government-bolsters--efforts-for-gender-and-sexual-diversity-in-new-action-plan/id2963498/](http://www.regjeringen.no/en/aktuelt/the-norwegian-government-bolsters--efforts-for-gender-and-sexual-diversity-in-new-action-plan/id2963498/)

<sup>6</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intersectionality>: Intersectionality is an analytical framework for understanding how a person’s various social and political identities combine to create different modes of discrimination and privilege.

surroundings, other people, and their own physical body. This exhibition therefore aims to shed light on what it is like to exist in the context of today's Norwegian society and its multifaceted identity politics, where expectations linked to a traditional and biologically based understanding of gender roles as binary are juxtaposed with an understanding of gender as a complex and multifaceted construct that exists on a spectrum.

“Intimated Structures” is curated by Jane Sverdrupsen of Rogaland Kunstsenter and is a direct response to the exhibition “Whisper: Poetics of Femininity” by the curators María Elena Ditrén and Juan Carlos Ditrén of CulturArte Dominicana. “Whisper: Poetics of Femininity” includes artworks by the Dominican artists Belkis Ramírez, Raquel Paiewonsky, Inés Tolentino, Citlally Miranda, and Sherezade García. The artworks represent a multi-generational expression and a cry from the Caribbean that ‘whispers’ their own and other people’s realities, with the intention of contributing to global gender equality whilst presenting Dominican art on the international stage. The two exhibitions are thematic and visual partners, and this groundbreaking exchange of curated exhibitions in the galleries of Rogaland Kunstsenter in Stavanger (2022) and Palacio de Bellas Artes in Santo Domingo (2023) provides a unique presentation of Dominican and Norwegian art to audiences in Europe and the Americas.

The exhibition is supported by the County of Rogaland, the City of Stavanger, the City of Bergen, Norwegian Crafts, The Norwegian Association for Arts and Crafts, Rogaland Kunstsenter, CulturArte Dominicana and Palacio de Bellas Artes.

**Jane Sverdrupsen,**

Curator and director of Rogaland Kunstsenter  
2023

# ARTISTS

# RITA MARHAUG

Rita Marhaug (b. 1965) is a visual artist from Bergen. The core themes in Marhaug's artistic production have been long-standing investigations of family relations and identity. Other strands of her practice include the many aspects of sensing, beauty and decay, life, and death, often linked to contemporary ethical dilemmas. Marhaug frequently collaborates with fellow artists and has been involved with several artist-run organizations over the years.

Educated at Norwegian art schools during the 80s, her media up until then focused on images: mainly drawing and printmaking. As part of her print training, Marhaug was introduced to bookbinding, which has been important in her praxis ever since. She has produced artist books, boxes, and similar objects. The skill of bookbinding also links back to the traditional textile handicraft that she uses in creating soft objects. Marhaug's performance praxis started in the second half of the 90s.

Wanting to visually explore femininity and masculinity, performance became her first choice, accompanied by photography and video. Her early performance work emphasized the female artist putting into play concepts like "strength" and "aggression". Later, she has tried to portray the individual body and situations related to the global economy of petroleum production.

Rita Marhaug has a Master's degree in Fine Art from Bergen Academy of Art and Design, KHiB and a BA in art history from the University of Bergen, UiB. Since the early 90s, she has participated in a great number of solo and group exhibitions and performance festivals both in Norway and internationally. From 2001 until 2013 she worked as professor at KHiB, Dept of Fine Art (now part of UiB). Between 2014 and 2018, she held the position of artistic leader of the organization Performance Art Bergen (PAB). For the last years, she has chaired the board of Foreningen Trykkeriet, the Centre of Contemporary Printmaking in Bergen.

## Artwork

### "TIDE"

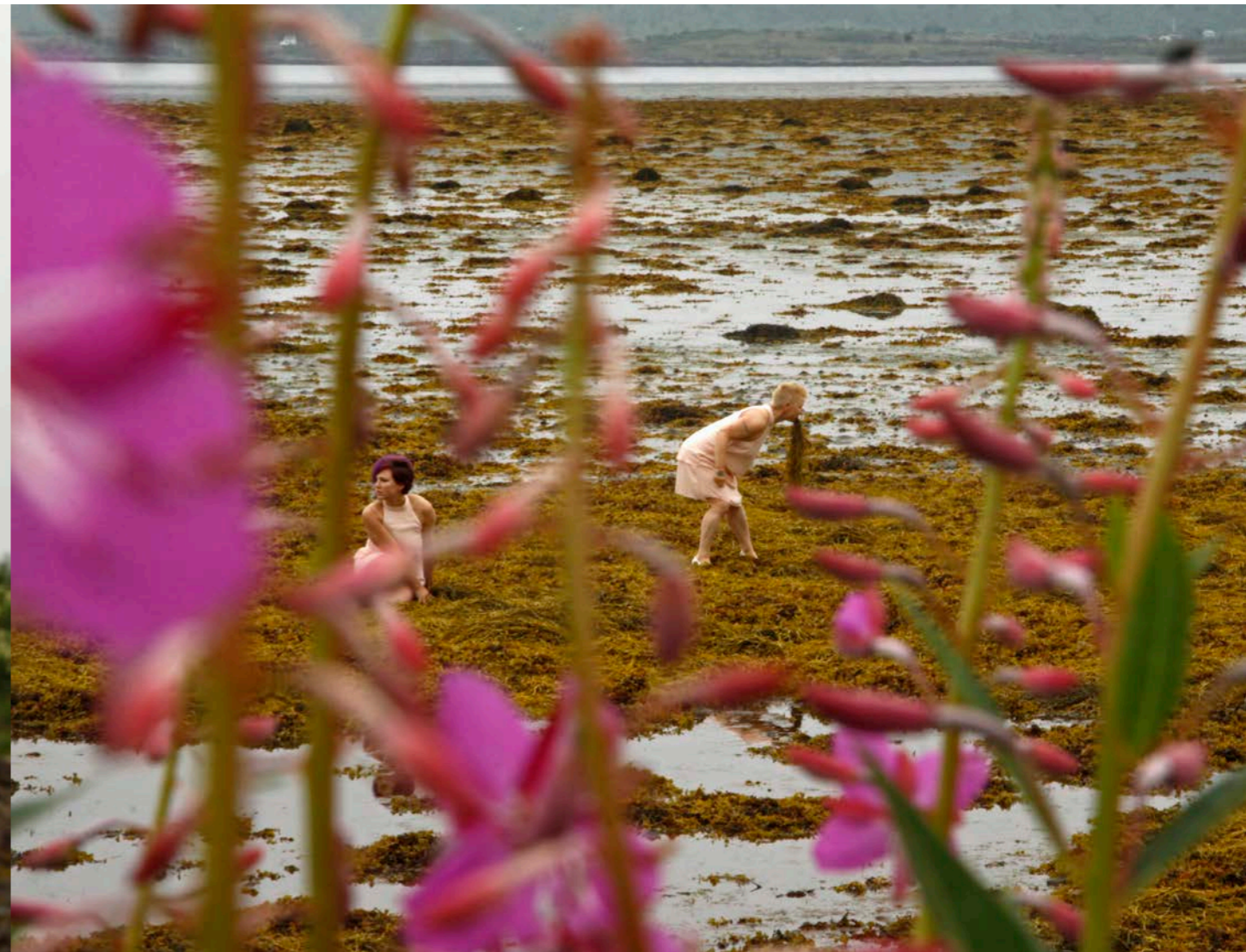
The photographic series "TIDE" shows motifs where the two actors are situated in the tidal zone. Mother and daughter appear in identical costumes on a large seaweed surface. Marhaug often uses autobiographical elements in her works. However, her intention is to highlight general phenomena and situations. "TIDE" (which in Norwegian is a synonym of time) refers both to the tide, and the passage of time as it simultaneously connects and separates generations. Behind the camera is Marhaug's eldest daughter Emilie, whilst Sofie, her younger daughter, contributes as a model alongside her mother.

### "Norwegian Liquid"

The artworks were photographed and filmed in Lofoten, Norway in July of 2022, with the assistance of Bjarte Bjørkum. The images and videos look at the seascape that has been the battleground for the struggle between industrial exploration for petroleum and protecting wildlife and the traditional (cod) fishery. Now the area has been protected from seismic exploration.



**"TIDE, Eye"** 2018  
Photograph  
76,5 x 58 cm



**"TIDE, Fireweed"** 2018  
Photograph  
76,5 x 58 cm





**"TIDE, Arms"** 2018  
Photograph  
76,5 x 58 cm



**"TIDE, Dresses"** 2018  
Photograph  
76,5 x 58 cm



**"TIDE, Reflections"** 2018  
Photograph  
76,5 x 58 cm



**"TIDE, Head"** 2018  
Photograph  
76,5 x 58 cm



**"TIDE, Mother and Daughter"** 2018

Photograph  
45 x 21 cm



**"TIDE, Resting Bodies" 2018**  
Photograph  
29,7 x 29,7 cm



**"TIDE, Sitting Bodies" 2018**  
Photograph  
29,7 x 29,7 cm



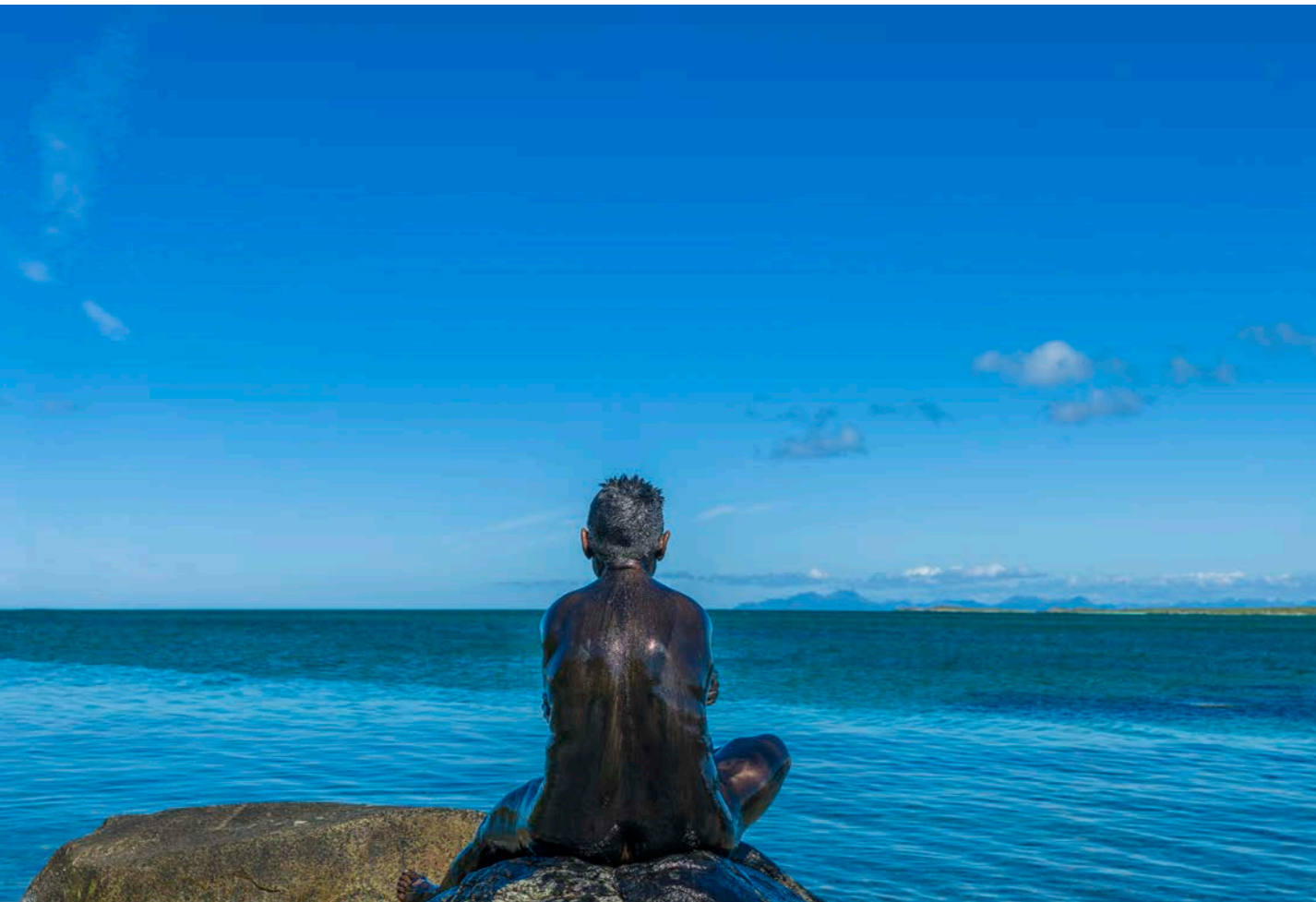
"TIDE, Folds" 2018

Photograph  
55 x 34 cm

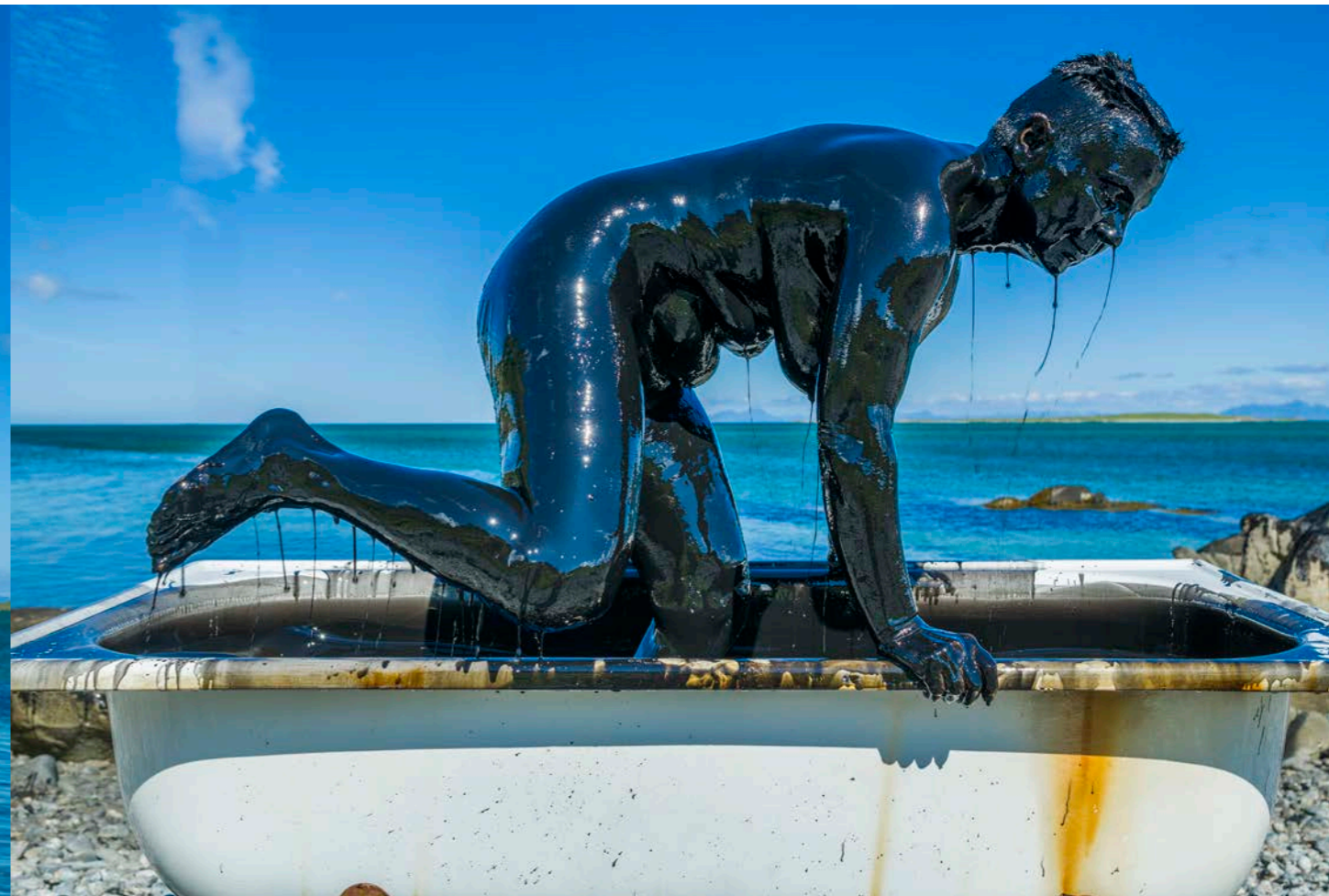


**"TIDE, Seaweed Body" 2018**

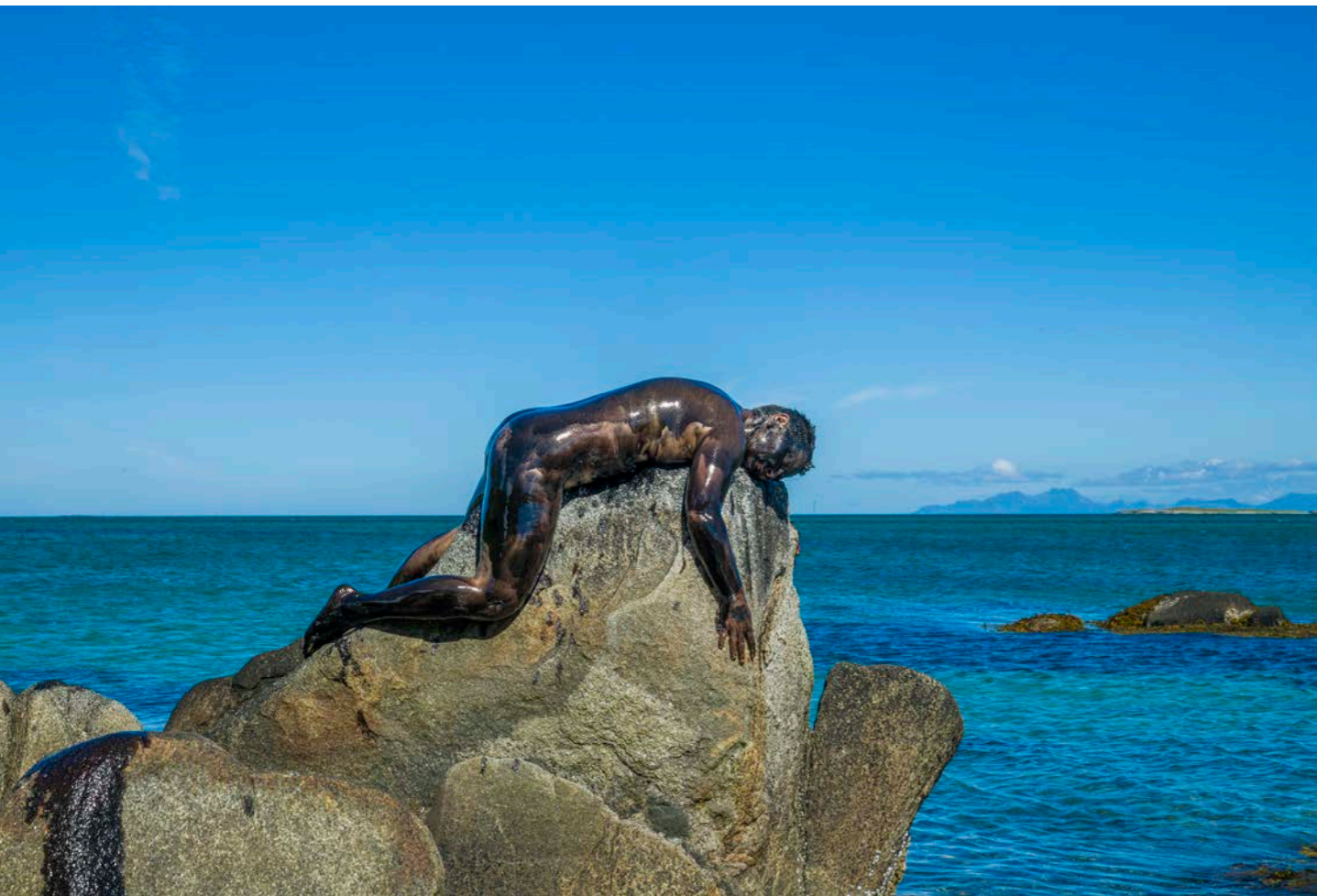
Photograph  
55 x 34 cm



**"Norwegian Liquid, The Interface VI"** 2022  
Photograph  
210 x 140 cm

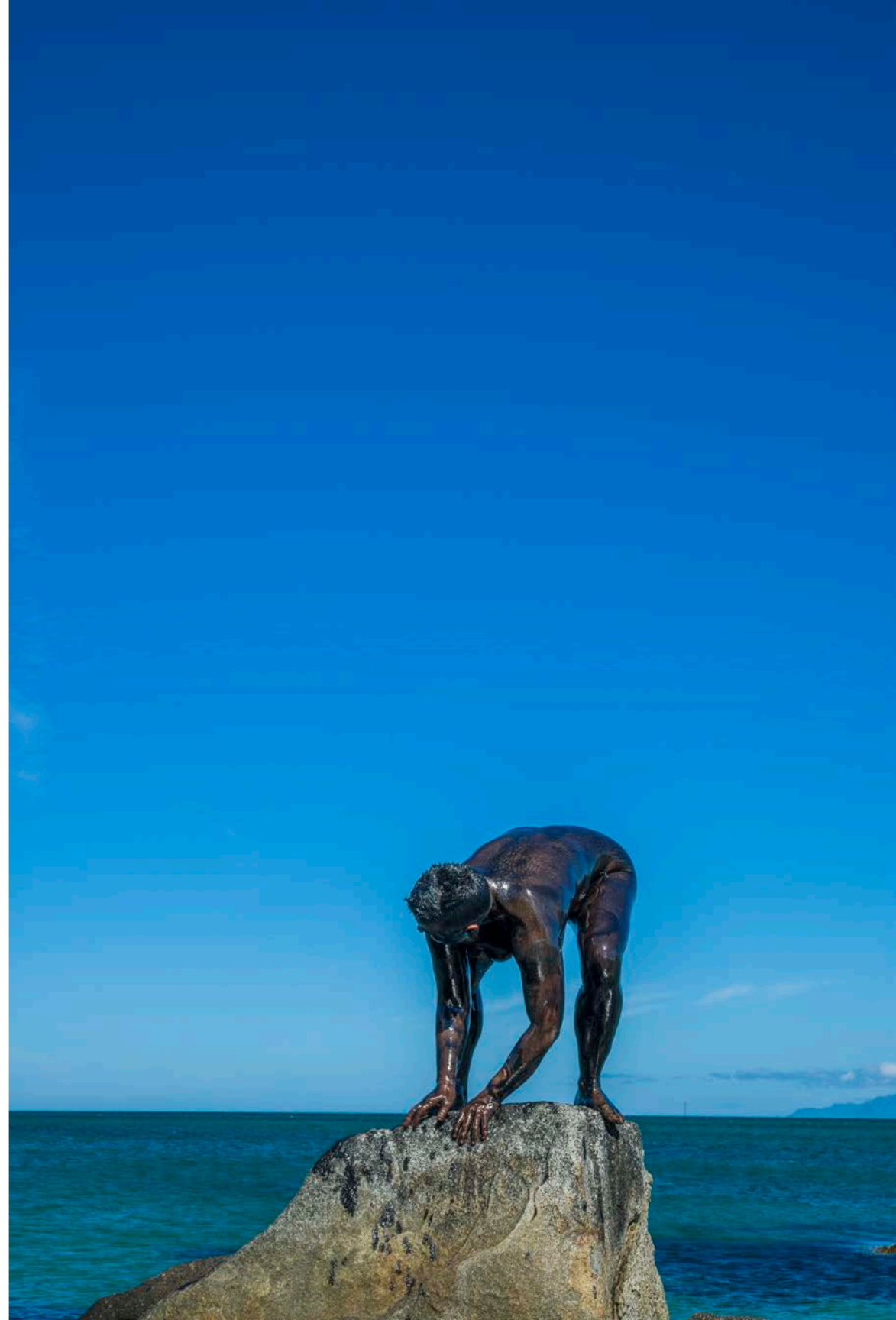


**"Norwegian Liquid, The Barrel I"** 2022  
Photograph  
140 x 93,3 cm



**"Norwegian Liquid, The Interface V"** 2022

Photograph  
210 x 140 cm



**"Norwegian  
Liquid,  
The Interface II"**

2022  
Photograph  
100 x 150 cm





**"Norwegian Liquid, The Barrel"** 2022  
Video work  
7 minutes



**"Norwegian Liquid, The Sleeping Donor"** 2022  
Video work  
14 minutes



# VEGARD EKBERG

Vegard Ekberg (b. 1990) is an artist based in Bergen, but he is originally from Haugesund, Rogaland. He has a Master's degree in Fine Art from the Faculty of Fine Art, Music and Design, University of Bergen.

As a photographer he is naturally interested in what can be perceived as truthful. Being a part of a society that glorifies a smooth and frictionless existence he veers in the opposite direction:

*“Reality is never as black and white as your typical Instagram account, and photography has never been as far away from the truth as how I experience it today.”*

As an artist who mainly works with digital photography, he works around, as well as within, the social and mechanical structures of the camera, often turning the lens on himself and his own situation. He challenges self-representation and creates personal narratives that investigate the border between fiction and reality. Being concerned with his own personal position within existence, he investigates his own affiliations, memories, and the illusion of being disconnected from nature. By documenting his own immediate surroundings, he tries to be as shameless as possible:

*“Acting more like a curious dog, I have developed a spontaneous and intuitive way of photographing. Using both text and camera as tools of investigation, I approach certain situations with a goal of obtaining a better understanding of my roles as a social and private human being.”*

## Artwork

### “ANIMALS”

This is a project which arose after countless visits to the toilet. The common denominator of these visits was that my girlfriend never seemed to remember to flush the toilet after she peed. This irritated me immensely. But, one day as I was peeing in her pee, being irritated that she had forgotten, I suddenly got the feeling that this was a very intimate thing to do. Much like the yellow mixture that was intertwining in the toilet bowl, a warm feeling started to spread inside me. I do not know if this is a common situation for other couples, but for me this was a daily occurrence. A combination of events evolved from being a problem to becoming a rather pleasant thought in my head. The duality of these feelings was what started to interest me. It is not easy to share your life with someone, but at the same time it is the best thing in the world. After living together for six years we have become very accustomed to each other. We not only combine our urine, but also the rest of our filth, bad habits and other messy situations. It is an unpolished everyday life which could be described as a primitive way of living, in the sense that we are able to be our inner animals with each other. There is a very specific freedom in being able to live like this with another person. A living situation that contains the entire spectrum of love and shit and the ability to be honest about it and to acknowledge the beauty of both extremes. So, I have named the project “ANIMALS”.

In this project I present a series of photographs taken within the apartment I share with my partner. Here I investigate the various domestic roles we share between us as a modern-day couple. By presenting photographs of situations that one would not necessarily want to share with others, I aim to present an intimate and relatable view of what it means to be in a relationship. By inviting the viewer into our private sphere, I am aiming to take an opposite approach to the typical photographic representation of people's lives on social media. By doing so, I challenge various social constructions/expectations regarding hygiene, appearance, and behavior.



**"ANIMALS"**  
2021  
Photograph  
70 x 47 cm



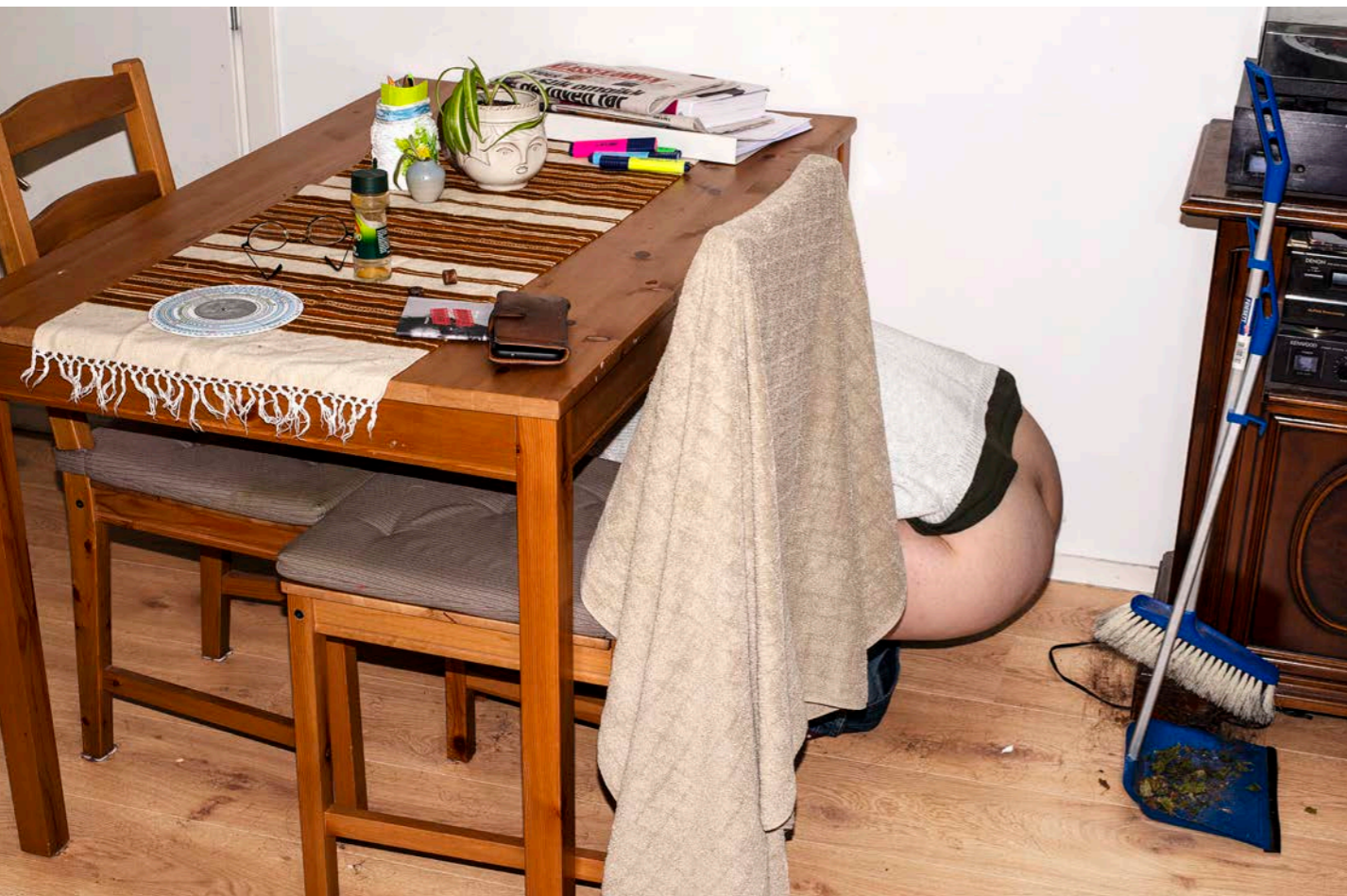
**"ANIMALS"**  
2021  
Photograph  
70 x 47 cm



**"ANIMALS"**  
2021  
Photograph  
30 x 20 cm



**"ANIMALS"**  
2021  
Photograph  
80 x 53 cm



**"ANIMALS"** 2021  
Photograph  
70 x 47 cm



**"ANIMALS"** 2021  
Photograph  
33 x 50 cm



**"ANIMALS"**  
2021  
Photograph  
100 x 67 cm



**"ANIMALS"**  
2021  
Photograph  
100 x 67 cm



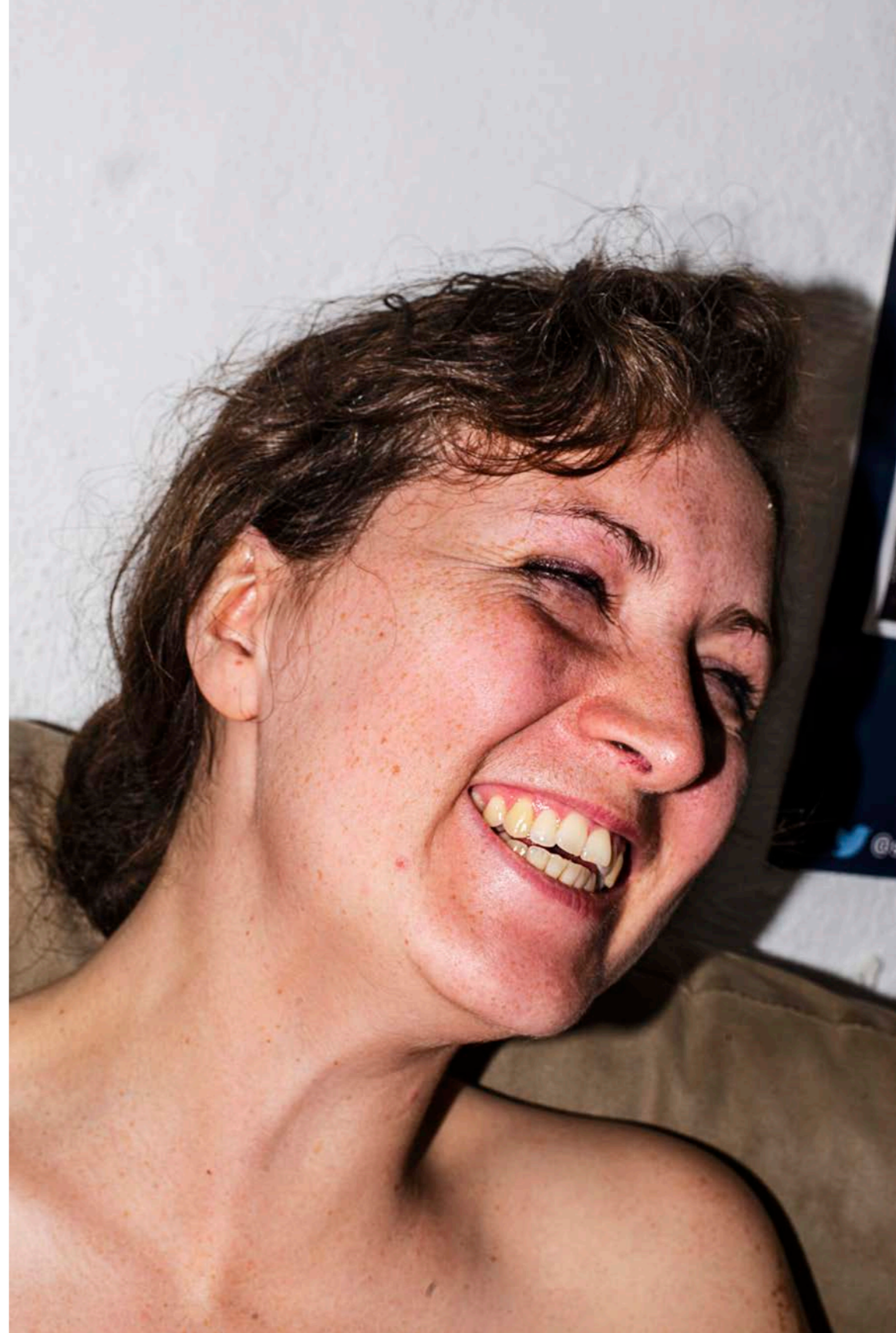
**"ANIMALS"** 2021  
Photograph  
33 x 50 cm



**"ANIMALS"**  
2021  
Photograph  
30 x 20 cm



**"ANIMALS"**  
2021  
Photograph  
30 x 20 cm



**"ANIMALS"**  
2021  
Photograph  
30 x 20 cm





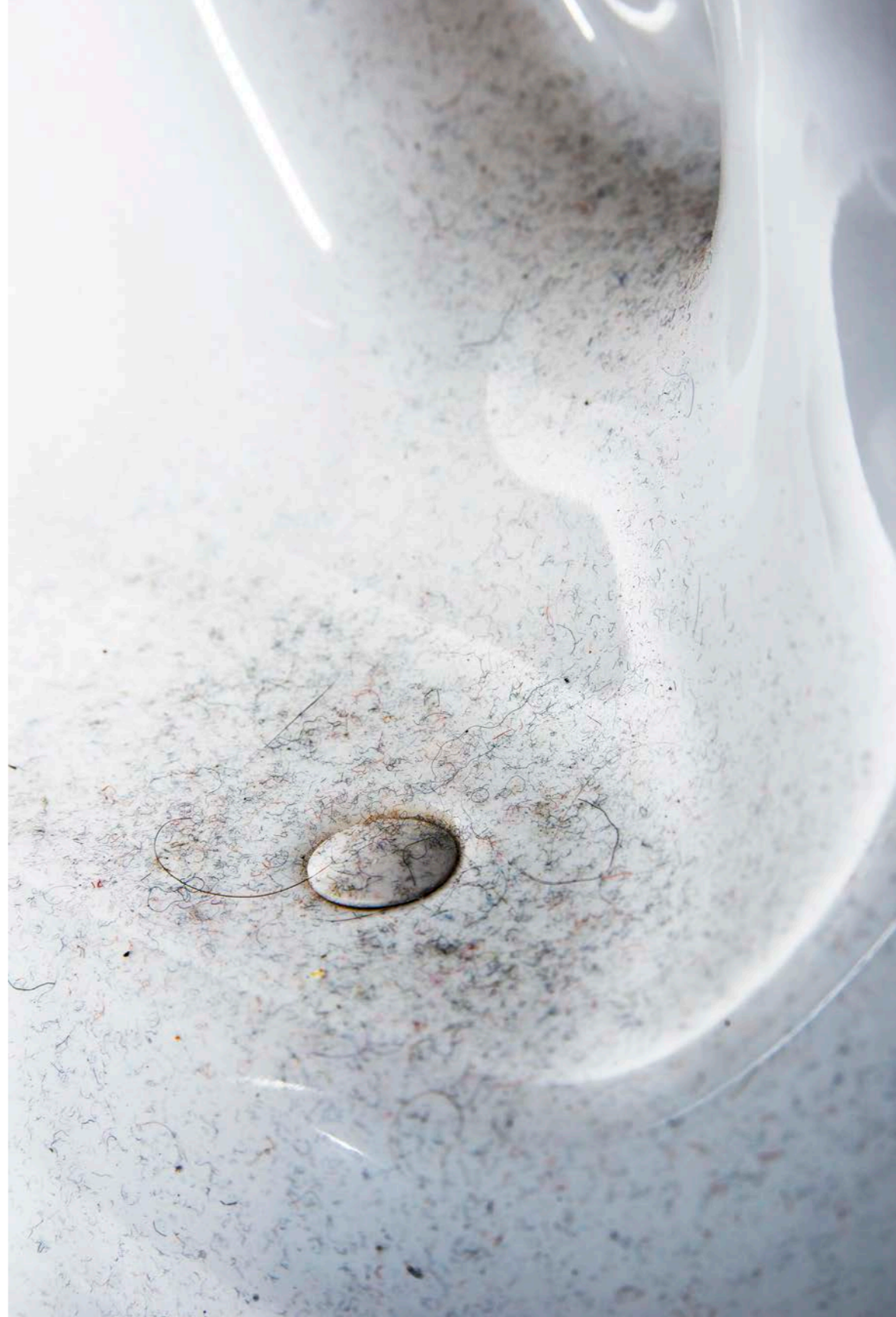
**"ANIMALS"**  
2021  
Photograph  
80 x 53 cm



**"ANIMALS"**  
2021  
Photograph  
100 x 67 cm



**"ANIMALS"**  
2021  
Photograph  
100 x 67 cm



**"ANIMALS"**  
2021  
Photograph  
100 x 67 cm



**"ANIMALS"**  
2021  
Photograph  
50 x 33 cm

# LARS KORFF LOFTHUS

In the paintings of Lars Korff Lofthus (b. 1978), artistic abstraction and figuration merge. His projects often contain an element of desire, and Lofthus wants the artistic gestures themselves to display sensuality, vulnerability, excess and risk. His work can be characterized as an investigation of positions where one feels both alienated and at home. Lofthus looks for visual material in museum archives, books and homoerotic material and wants to create tableaux where nature, desire and tradition come together in new scenarios.

Lars Korff Lofthus has a Master's degree in Fine Art from Bergen Academy of Art and Design, KHiB. He has an extensive exhibition practice and engages in writing, dissemination and curating. His work can be found in the permanent collections of institutions such as the national museum, Bergen art museum KODE, the City of Oslo and Equinor. He divides his time and work between Bergen, where he has held an associate professorship at the Academy of Fine Arts, and his studio in Hardanger. Lars Korff Lofthus is represented by Entrée gallery.

## Artwork

### “Male National Costume Modified”

In this project Lars Korff Lofthus departs from his normal painting practice. Here, the national costume of the Hardanger region in Norway is the focus, and specifically the men's garments. The traditional outfits have been altered and are presented as bold suggestions for improvement – without ever having been commissioned to do so. The three editorial photographs exhibited here were originally accompanied by a series of performances and a display of the actual altered garments.

Lars Korff Lofthus wants to investigate how different rules seem to apply to the appearance of men and women. The national costumes accentuate their femininity and masculinity. In the photographs, Lofthus has added new elements to the male garments to see how that perception can change. He has borrowed from fashion, pop culture, women's costumes and foreign cultures. The spectator can no longer be sure of the authenticity of the costume—which details are original, and which are not. Lars Korff Lofthus is interested in who gets to decide how gender and nationality are performed today.

The series was shown at the Norwegian national museum for their grand re-opening in 2022. The photos were produced with the assistance of the acclaimed photographer Bent René Synnevåg.



**"Male National  
Costume  
Modified"**  
2017  
Photograph  
150 x 100 cm



**"Male National  
Costume  
Modified"**  
2017  
Photograph  
150 x 100 cm



**"Male National  
Costume  
Modified"**  
2017  
Photograph  
150 x 100 cm

# GRO GJ. N. DE-MARTINE

Gro De-Martine (b. 1981) has a Master's degree from Bergen Academy of Art and Design, KHiB, and lives in Karmøy, Rogaland. Her artworks are based on her own life and experiences, with a focus on natural materials, and she makes both two- and three-dimensional works through embroidery, weaving, photography and painting.

De-Martine is inspired by how we see ourselves and others in a social context and investigates the subconscious norms and rules in our society. Based on her own life, she talks about how bodily and mental struggles can come from both external influences and from within.

For "Intimated Structures" De-Martine has used a personal trauma as the basis for her artworks. Using wool, metal, blood, and linen, she has made a new series of works based on repressed memories and how she is processing the experience; telling her story and letting the artwork talk to others.

## Artwork

### **"Repressed Memories"**

Repressing memories or dissociative amnesia is a defence mechanism to block out painful memories. It is an involuntary response and a way of coping. "Repressed Memories" consists of two cylindrical sculptures made from wool and blood, hovering above the floor.

### **"Illusory"**

Even if your memories seem true and real, someone can tell you they are false or impossible. That your reality is an illusion. "Illusory" is an installation made of 21 woven discs mounted on the wall. Each of the discs is woven around an iron ring which has rusted, and its pigment has subsequently colored the wool.

### **"Rumination I & II"**

These two artworks display quotes which express the consequences of repressed memories. The works are made using the technique of linen embroidery on square linen sheets, colored with the artist's own blood.

### **"Flawed"**

Self-portrait made with the artist's own blood as its material.



**"Repressed Memories"** 2023  
Installation with iron rings, wool thread  
100 x 40 cm and 170 x 60 cm



**"Illusory"** 2023  
Installation with iron rings, wool thread  
Variable dimensions





**"Rumination I"** 2023  
Embroidered linen, blood  
20 x 20 cm



**"Rumination II"** 2023  
Embroidered linen, blood  
20 x 20 cm



**"Flawed"** 2023

Painting on paper with the artist's own blood  
42 x 29 cm

# INGVILD MELBERG EIKELAND

Ingvild Melberg Eikeland (b. 1989) lives and works in Stavanger. She got her BA in photography from Griffith College in Dublin in 2014 and finished the MA program in Fine Arts at Umeå Academy, Sweden in the spring of 2019. She is currently studying sociology at the University of Stavanger.

Her artistic practice is informed by the political and social phenomena you can find in day-to-day and popular culture, creating juxtapositions between different expressions, cultural traditions, and hierarchies.

Ingvild works in a number of different media, such as textiles, sculptures, installations and videos, and in recent years she has focused in particular on tufting carpets. Tufting is a technique that can be observed both in traditional handicrafts and in industrially produced textiles, such as floor mats and carpets. By using industrial tools to tuft wall hangings, she creates a juxtaposition between the handmade and personal, and the mass-produced.

## Artwork

### “The Perfect Victim” (2020-)

“The perfect victim” is concerned with the narrative of female victims being responsible for their misfortunes, which can be traced back to classical Greek theatre. In Greek tragedies, the female characters who challenge their male patrons, and defy subordination, ultimately see their ambitions and choices cause them suffering or even death. These theatre productions, which were written and performed by men in front of an all-male audience, celebrated the moral victory over the difficult woman. This narrative lives on as the trope of “The perfect victim”, which is an idealized image of a victim who is deserving of sympathy and justice. The perfect victim is female, preferably young, and almost always white. You can find stories about the perfect victim in the media, in popular culture and in courtrooms.

The victims she portrays in her work are murder victims from the crime drama series “CSI: Miami”. The motifs in the tapestries are based on still images from the TV series, where gloved hands are seen interacting with victims of violence. The narrative is left out of the scenes, and the intentions of the hands remain unsaid.

The hands metaphorically represent the viewers’ voyeurism while they perform a moral investigation of the victims’ potential complicity in their own misfortunes. In two of the rugs in the series, the gloved hands are detached from the action in the pictures, where they appear cartoonish and playful, which further reinforces the ambivalence.

The boundaries between the well-meaning and the hurtful, and the curious and the perverse, are difficult to define. Brief moments that are captured through the TV screen, and which we would otherwise bury in our memories, are here monumentalized in the tapestries.



**"The Perfect Victim"** 2020-  
Tufting technique, acrylic and wool  
91 x 121 cm



**"The Perfect Victim"** 2020-  
Tufting technique, acrylic and wool  
102 x 137 cm



**"The Perfect Victim"** 2020-  
Tufting technique, acrylic and wool  
72 x 96 cm



**"The Perfect Victim"** 2020-  
Tufting technique, acrylic and wool  
118 x 144 cm



**"The Perfect Victim"** 2020-  
Tufting technique, acrylic and wool  
120 x 142 cm



**"The Perfect Victim"** 2020-  
Tufting technique, acrylic and wool  
2 pieces 90 x 51 cm

# SUPPORTERS



**Norwegian  
Crafts**



**EXCEL**



**NOVUS PLAZA  
HODELPA**

**ROGALAND  
KUNSTSENTER**