

Freja Sofie Kirk



Pastimes

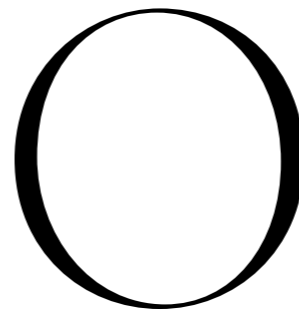
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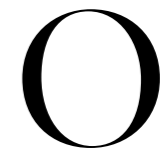
Freja Sofie Kirk
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INTRODUCTION



It is a great pleasure to introduce this publication accompanying Freja Sofie Kirk's solo exhibition *Pastimes* at O—Overgaden. Throughout recent years, O—Overgaden has, with generous support of the Augustinus Foundation, published a monographic series in conjunction with our large-scale solo exhibitions, aiming to expand the conversations around each show and produce new, offspring material.

In this instance, curator and writer Elisa R. Linn, and writer and publications editor at O—Overgaden Nanna Friis, have each contributed a text each on the layering of footage in Freja Sofie Kirk's work. A warm and heartfelt thank you to both contributors. I further wish to thank the whole team at O—Overgaden for their efforts in realizing the exhibition, as well as the graphic design team at fanfare for their always dedicated work, and of course not least the artist, Freja, for generously sharing conceptualizations and co-thinking with all of us, through both the exhibition and this publication.

The unsettling, intertwined spin of desire-and-death in entertainment industry imagery is central to Freja Sofie Kirk's exhibition at O—Overgaden.

In a new video work, the ancient war trick of falling from the saddle pretending to die—a stunt that has become a staple of North American rodeo shows—is performed by a female professional trick rider, filmed close-up. The violent, yet mesmerising thrill of the scene interlaces with images of workers in Hazmat suits, frozen mid-task while cleaning shiny, golden bullet cases from an amusement shooting range, as well as found footage of U.S. Army soldiers jokingly posing with brooms in place of rifles, in a so-called Mannequin Challenge.

Dizzily, the camera circulates in these static scenes: a dangling female body, frozen sanitation workers, and motionless troopers. All are part of an entertainment industry in which playing dead and playing with death coexist—where both the gun and the camera shoot. Meanwhile, the seamless, circular looping of the film, haunted by the soundtrack of drumming horse hooves, keeps us captive in a suspended time that, contrary to the images' immediate seductive quality, carries an imprint of maintenance, repetition, exhaustion, and a quieter, less spectacular, drag of death.

Like the film's rerun, a series of photographs is reflected in the mirror-clad columns, creating a "hall of mirrors" effect where the spectator is included in the exhibition's imagery. The motifs—quoting the shooting range's own promotional images on social media—zoom in on a cup of coffee, the visible edges of a gun, and in most images, a cookie. Combining caffeine, the cookie's sugar, and the dopamine of shooting, the images thus capture a space where *pastimes*, pleasure, and the potential of violence exist side by side.

Both in parts of the film and in the photographs, the original two-dimensional still image is stretched and transformed into a three-dimensional space via a computer-generated eye. This otherworldly, synthetic effect—whereby we can suddenly step into the image, circulate around the coffee cup or walk around the running horse and stuntwoman arrested in mid-air—makes the photograph "come alive," turning the photographic documents into a space in which we can wander.

Rhea Dall,
Director and Chief Curator at O—Overgaden,
March 2026



IF IT BLEEDS, IT LEADS

Elisa R. Linn

O The steady drumming of hooves on sand signals more than pursuit; it carries the tightening tension of distance collapsing and the looming certainty that someone, hunter or hunted, is about to be overtaken. In the film presented in Freja Sofie Kirk's exhibition, a woman on horseback suddenly slips from the saddle, tilting from upright command into horizontal collapse, her upper body dangling as if lifeless for a moment, her arms and carefully manicured hands dragging through the fine, dusty sand. Her long cascading mane, dramatically caught in the rush of movement, veils her face as if she had been struck and overcome by her opponent, reminiscent of scenes from classic Westerns. One cannot help but surrender here to what Laura Mulvey has famously called the voyeuristic gaze, which fetishizes the rider's body as it hangs alongside the horse, transforming it into an aesthetic, almost eroticized, intimate spectacle tinged with guilty pleasure. Abducted, injured, and dragged along the ground, the female rider is rendered a victim for our viewing—spectacularized and put on display. Are we complicit?

In fact, what we are seeing is not a fall, but a controlled slide as part of a popular trick-riding stunt with the telling name Death Drag. The rider hooks her leg into a retention loop or secures it to a handle, an inconspicuous yet crucial act of anchoring. As the horse maintains or increases its speed, the rider's body opens outward to the side—a slow tipping, it seems, from control into surrender, though what reads as surrender may itself be an illusion. Here, Kirk's slow-motion close-up lays bare the very mechanisms of the stunt: The trick rider's hands are held in controlled muscular tension; her fingertips occasionally brush through the sand to stabilize her position and fine-tune her balance. Ultimately, such a performance of the Death Drag is far removed from any damsel-in-distress trope. It is instead a choreographed technique rooted in a principle of strategic self-concealment: by suspending the body low and laterally along the horse's side, the rider becomes difficult to detect or strike in combat. The vulnerability on display is, in this sense, a calculated one—the body yielded not in defeat, but in order to “dodge bullets and arrows.”

The practice originated in Dzhigitovka, the military training of light cavalry, in which riders executed extreme maneuvers at full gallop in order to remain mobile, combat-ready, and difficult to attack. This traditional style of trick riding originated in the Caucasus region and was later formalized within the Cossack cavalry culture of the Russian Empire. Such acrobatic riding techniques were later adapted by, for example, the founder of the modern circus, Philip Astley (1742–1814), into entertainment performances, where former soldiers staged militarily inflected vaulting and trick-riding skills in spectacular theatrical shows. Today, the stunt is not only part of a pop-culturally charged, romanticized (white) Wild West iconography, symbolizing the idealized free spirit of archetypal heroism, but also an expression of its roots in military evasion and surprise maneuvers—a lineage subsequently overwritten by the misconception of it as “western and authentically American.”¹

Catapulted into the here and now, like acts in one of Astley's circus shows, Kirk's film stages a succession of mediated bodily arrangements, in which control masquerades as loss of control. The death-drag riding scene is followed by men performing a militarized hypermasculinity of defense with a household brush. Some are dressed only in shirts bearing yellow “ARMY” lettering, underwear, and socks; others are masked in camouflage outerwear and sunglasses. They remain frozen in combat poses that are not spontaneous but meticulously arranged, rehearsing an embodied drill, like shop-window mannequins as the camera circles them.

As philosopher Michel Foucault observed in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975) with regard to docile bodies (bodies that are pliable, useful, obedient, trainable), “the soldier was someone who could be recognized from afar.”² This applies not only to uniforms and the army, but also to contexts in which military logics are normalized through the mechanics of play. Here, the infamous ‘bullet time’ (a visual effect in film and media that slows down or freezes time for subjects while allowing the camera to move around them at normal speed) becomes not merely an expression of the digital control of time and movement,³ where digital cinema breaks the indexical link between time and movement, but a simulated and temporally manipulated bullet-dodging maneuver. Eventually these scenes evoke not only the collective imagery of contemporary far-right mobilizations, such as the January 6, 2021 attack

1. See Neil Campbell, *The Rhizomatic West: Representing the American West in a Transnational, Global, Media Age* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008).

2. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, translated by Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), pp.155–56.

3. Lev Manovich, “What Is Digital Cinema?” in Shane Denson and Julia Leyda (eds), *Post-Cinema: Theorizing 21st-Century Film* (Falmer: ReFRAME Books, 2016), pp.3–11.

on the US Capitol, but also what sociologist and writer Klaus Theweleit theorized as the “armored body” (Körperpanzer).⁴ Developed through his close readings of the interwar Freikorps (German paramilitary units) in *Male Fantasies* (1987), this concept describes the psychic infrastructure of proto-fascist formations: a fantasy of hardness, sealed boundaries, and defensive rigidity that must be kept intact against perceived threats of dissolution—threats typically coded as feminine, fluid, or chaotic.

Contrasting with Kirk's film are the sleek lifestyle photographs arranged along the gallery's wall. Seemingly images familiar from the everyday cliché of the “morning routine,” onto which one projects desires, not despite, but precisely because of, their utterly ordinary and alluring commodity aesthetic. The generic coffee cup, exactly as any average consumer knows it: standard porcelain, a half-eaten cookie resting on the rim of the saucer, a small spoon placed beside it on a red serving tray or an LED-lit bar counter etched with traces of wear—no frills, and far removed from the curated trendiness of third-wave coffee culture. For a moment, one might imagine oneself within this photographic scenery, romantically immersed in “me time,” as a fleeting sense of autonomous stability seems to arise amid a disquieting, alienated world.

O Yet the image is inseparable from the historical reality that coffee became the drink of the modern working world, the self-optimizing stimulant of an emerging bourgeois and industrial-military order, replacing alcohol in early modern Europe as the dominant social beverage because it sharpened alertness, fostered rationality, and, above all, cultivated discipline.⁵ Upon closer inspection, the slightly surreal distortions and elongated details of this motif reveal themselves as a metaphorical “waking up” or reality check. One might think of Agent Dale Cooper repeatedly declaring, “That is a damn fine cup of coffee” in David Lynch's *Twin Peaks* television series, where the phrase functions as a recurring symbolic anchor of normalcy and orientation against a backdrop of the surreal horror of identity and place. Here in Kirk's exhibition, too, the seemingly banal and innocuous motif is tagged as subtly peripheral yet menacing. The cup is flanked by the faintly cropped, gleaming handle and magazine of a pistol, which, like in a perilously cheesy 007 teaser aesthetic, does not immediately catch the eye, but only casually. The weapon remains present even during the coffee break,

4. Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies: Volume 1: Women, Floods, Bodies, History*, translated by Stephen Conway, Erica Carter, and Chris Turner (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

5. See Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Tastes of Paradise: A Social History of Spices, Stimulants, and Intoxicants*, translated by David Jacobson (New York: Pantheon Books, 1992).6. Ibid., p.167.

6. See Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Volume I, translated by Ben Fowkes (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1976), pp.163–77.

always ready at hand. As Karl Marx observed, commodity fetishism alienates products from their actual use value, symbolically charging them while obscuring the underlying social, ecological, and economic relations of their production.⁶

O The pistol in the image is detached from its conditions of manufacture and actual functional use, while its presentation points to the threats embedded within its own dramaturgy—a dramaturgy that subtly recalls Kenneth Anger's 1965 short film *Kustom Kar Kommandos*, which isolates chrome surfaces, paintwork, and gestures of caress. In the film, the car is never shown as functional transportation; it is pure surface, pure object of desire. This is precisely what these photographs suggest—images based on real social-media advertising for popular shooting ranges marketed as experiential leisure destinations. These venues position themselves not merely as training facilities, but as recreational and social experiences, inviting visitors to try pistols or semi-automatic weapons in settings where, as one advertisement puts it, “you can happily and safely spend time with friends and family.” It comes as no surprise, then, that the two figures dressed in white protective suits and disposable gloves who appear in another sequence of Kirk's film are not, as one might assume, forensic investigators examining a crime scene. They are, rather, cleaning personnel, tasked with removing lead dust from the floor and bullet-scarred walls; rendering invisible the material traces of what has been packaged as casual, trivial, café-style entertainment.

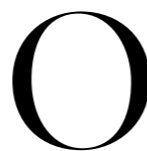
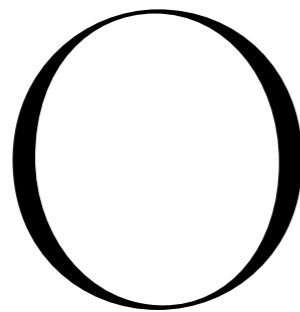
Kirk's exhibition probes not only the ethics of this “militainment” industry, in which violence seeps into the banality of everyday entertainment, but also the way perception itself is “logisticized,” adopting the geometry of military optics, as theorist Paul Virilio, for instance, emphasized: namely, how the gaze shifts from observing to targeting. The perspective of the cockpit or the aiming camera does not merely structure military practice; it shapes visual culture as a whole. The image becomes an instrument of control, space a strategic surface, the opponent a marked silhouette. Indeed, the viewer is positioned in a role akin to that of the operator.⁷ This reality is further underscored by the mirror panels mounted on columns in the gallery. These fragmented mirrors work on two levels: they literalize the way subjects constitute themselves through images, while simultaneously implicating the very act of perception as an object of inquiry—because under modern techno-military conditions, the viewing subject is increasingly understood as one component within a larger apparatus-driven system. Seeing, here, no longer means merely perceiving. It entails anticipating, calculating, and projecting ahead. To see is already to target.

7. See Paul Virilio, *War and Cinema: The Logistics of Perception*, translated by Patrick Camiller (London: Verso, 1989), pp.69–70, 73.

In this context, the question of how we see—and what seeing does to us—becomes urgent beyond the gallery walls. In today’s scroll-rhythm era of digital witnessing, the image is a weapon of a different kind. Lines such as “Have you ever tried this one?” from Sabrina Carpenter’s seemingly innocent pop song *Juno* (2024) are recoded and instrumentalized for ICE deportation propaganda on social media, while videos depicting real, brutal, racist violence circulate as strategies of image cultivation and recruitment. This demands that we ask something beyond the ethics of image production, as Susan Sontag addressed in her final essay, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2005). She argued that the moral weight of violence, which never appears raw but always mediated, does not reside solely within the image itself as a visual event, but in how its media embedding and modes of presentation produce both empathy and detachment, a state of compassion fatigue, in our engagement with it.⁸

Kirk’s exhibition compels us not only to see through the seductive normalization of militarized aesthetics of violence—their seamless absorption into the circuits of entertainment culture—but to recognize that ethics do not reside in the image itself, nor in its cathartic build-up and release. They reside in conscious engagement with the image’s circulation and performativity: in the demand for a reflective stance toward one’s own act of seeing. This is an ethics of looking that destabilizes the ideologically constructed “we” of the spectator. It finds a theoretical echo in philosopher and art historian Georges Didi-Huberman’s dialectic of “what we see, what looks at us”: the recognition that to look is not to receive but to construct meaning. This could hardly stand further from the crude newsroom mantra: “if it bleeds, it leads”.

Breakfast where the news is read
 Television, children fed
 Unborn living, living dead
 Bullet strikes the helmet’s head
 —The Doors, “The Unknown Soldier” (1968)



8. See Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003).

SHOTS

Nanna Friis

The camera is shooting, the gun is shooting. The human acts, the camera shoots. The bullet is shot, the human is shot and becomes a dead human or a fictionally dead human or an image.

It’s always a fine line: how far down a pun road you can walk without jeopardizing your seriousness. Language can be meaningful exactly as this wrapping and unwrapping of images, because words possess shades of meaning that, in the best cases, are able to make images larger, wider, deeper. Freja Sofie Kirk’s images are already large and deep and wide, not necessarily in terms of scale—although, sometimes that too. Then, within the images, an accumulation of layers is at play; one that has to do with both the motifs’ precision and the ambiguity of language.

Shoot, shot, shooting. Simple words but also actions and situations and things that point to things as disparate as guns and cameras, violence and vanity, coffee and bullets, real death and fictional life and the other way around. That all of this is woven into an unusually flawless totality in Kirk’s images—effortless, elegant, and artificial, like a successful stunt—simultaneously feels like a mystery and a given. A young woman has perfected the skill of hurling herself down from a horseback and appearing lifeless, dangling like a corpse while the animal thunders along, making the simulated danger of the situation quite real. It wouldn’t take more than an unexpected crash and some galloping hooves in the skull to cause a real death. The horse and the woman are shot with Kirk’s camera.

In the same video, the same camera has shot the floor of a shooting range; it is scattered with cartridge cases, that is, covered in poetic sprinkles of gold. The remains of the gun shot lie there and shine like treasure and a battlefield, creating a clinking sound like automatic guns or a jewelry box. They must be swept away so that new residues of leisure shots can make the floor golden again. Concealed figures conduct this cleaning work, wearing those suits for handling hazardous, contagious material. The camera moves in very close to them, reveling in close-ups of golden cases between the fingers of an employee, and I’m thinking about which shot is more powerful, more real: the bullet’s or the lens’s. Is violence more evident when it is filmed or when it is practiced?

Needless to say, camera shots came after shots from weapons. Ever since pointy sticks and small stones turned out to be well-suited as projectiles, humans have shot at one another and their surroundings. That a camera has later been granted a similar vocabulary is remarkable. When something is shot, it often stops moving; turns lifeless, still, into an image. The camera and the weapon share the anatomy of shots thus far. But certainly, there is a major physical difference between what a lens and a gun can do, for instance, to the human body at which they’re both shooting.

In her long-canonized text *On Photography*, Susan Sontag writes “to photograph someone is to violate them” and later she labels the photograph a “soft murder” of the photographed person. Taking someone’s photo is to take something. From them? The omnipresence of photos and film in today’s screen reality has, to say the least, complicated, if not overturned, Sontag’s argument from 1977. We are long past the photograph’s offence potential, so to speak. We’re already far out into the abyss, and surely there is no way back. Millions of people are softly murdering themselves, day in and day out. The whole world is photographs; the whole world is violence and its images. Sontag is still right, even though images have fully invaded reality, replaced them if you will, but perhaps you can say that the violence of the lens is self-induced—we’re masochists.

I don’t see Freja Sofie Kirk’s work as a well-behaved illustration of Sontag’s argument. On the contrary, I see it as a sophisticated expansion, a reversing or a renegotiation of what the camera is, what the image is, what the shot is, what the violence is. To name something signature-like of an artistic practice as young as Kirk’s is probably an exaggeration, but her artificial hand-heldness is becoming characteristic. With an intrusive focus that makes the images seem exquisite and momentary, like perfectly ripe fruits, the camera makes its way towards the motifs so that they appear both like incomprehensible fiction and like something real that you are gazing at with your own eyes. Unfiltered matter, unprocessed by machines.

Over and over again, the filmed tempo pierces reality in projectile-like ways—not to violate any realities, but rather to make their inherent violence become clearer. At the same time, the images are also slow, though not a theatrical slow-motion. Kirk’s slowness is somehow the opposite of artificial, although the shots do have a robotic digitalized quality to them. It becomes more difficult to determine what is camera and what is computer, and therefore what is reality and what is fiction. What makes reality real, fiction fictional. No one is dead, no one is in any particular danger, no one is actually brutal in Kirk’s images. And yet, they’re imbued with this dangerous atmosphere. Shooting ranges and stunts because violence is seductive and mainstream.

Generally, and constantly, a range of quite complex displacements are at play. Layers of reality are elegantly stacked and collapsed. A virtuous and living woman is acting dead; AI is acting still photographs; the shooting range is acting violence; a gang of soldiers is *acting* a gang of soldiers. It is difficult, and irrelevant, to decide which of Kirk's images possess the most spectacular potential for fiction, but something extra grotesque sticks to the thought of an army killing time with a "mannequin challenge" in the barracks: stand very still and create attack formations with broomsticks, dustpans, shoes, and cardboard. The more something freezes, the more it becomes a tableau, and the clearer everything appears. These soldiers are freezing. The image of them makes the scene's entirety even more frozen and detailed—and I'm thinking: What on earth are they doing?

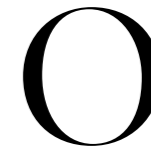
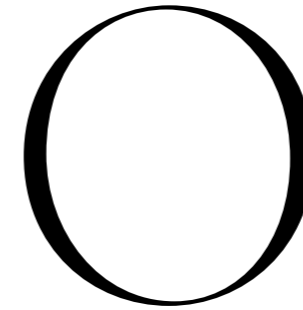
The bordering-on-unreal quality that features in every scenario in Kirk's video is enhanced by her intensely aestheticized shots; everything is staggeringly gorgeous. Horse muscles beneath a luxurious harness; a pulsing human torso pretending to be plunging to certain death; the delicious little treasure of a cartridge case between rubber-clad fingers. This "exquisite-izing" of some fundamentally horrible practices does not beautify them but rather enhances their absurdity. It points towards the unreal and the actual circumstances that we're dealing with: a palette of amusements. Leisure activities, simply. Trick riding is niche, but also a well-known and cherished discipline, while people rush to shooting ranges to hang out, go on dates, chat, and chill.

Free time is a time of entertainment; labor's unconcerned antidote. Lean back, immerse in a bit of sedation or stimulation through fiction. Momentarily, people take some off-time from society, go and rent a gun, buy a coffee, see a show. Shots in the cup, shots in the magazine, shots hanging on a wall. When an image is warped, does it then become less realistic? Is representation slightly inhibited? Photos of coffee cups that have been digitally stretched are probably less recognizable than non-stretched photos of coffee cups. The motif is not exactly turning fictitious, but Kirk's decision to stretch the coffee images feels like a technical variation of the displacements of reality generally at play in the work. The motif, the vanilla-war-like atmosphere, a show-ification of death. Flexing one's big arms, clenching one's eventually deadly fists to pretend they're going into battle.

It is evident and disheartening to note all the masculine associations between soldiers and weapons, the sound of the galloping horse, and all these different types of shots. It feels unnecessary to waste too many words on the gun as a phallus or war as a man's game. Misogyny is, and will be, a worldwide truth and a dead-looking girl on a horse is obviously not its poster girl. She is a lot of other things, too, but perhaps a distorted form of desire clings to both woman and horse. You could say that

misogyny is the lethal consequence of unresolved and inept masculine desire; and without objectifying the trick rider, a kindred desire could arise from the combination of horse and riding and woman. And then there's the fact that she's acting dead, or dying. What's happening here doesn't feel unambiguous or even decipherable. Kirk's work is subtly encrypted, as usual, but the rider's devotion—her half-open hands, fluttering hair, legs apart, a stretched-out body—appears connected to something erotic and violent, and the myriad overlaps between those.

And it continues. Speed, battle, shooting, and desire have come to stay. Out in reality and inside the fictions, in the world and in the arts. I don't see Kirk's work as repetitive or cyclical; she moves between the three scenarios, the three shots with a feverish drive reminiscent of actual time. Reality rushes forward; beautiful, broken, dead, vitalizing, and from time to time, something—it could be art—will make us halt for a bit, freeze, look, notice a detail that makes reason collapse or crystallize. The fact that people pay money to shoot killing units through sheets of cardboard. That people shape their hands or other pointy objects into guns and pretend to kill. A strong man in a very tight black T-shirt with "ARMY" written across his chest and a narrow black tie around his neck. The perfectly manicured artificially dead female hand. The ways we think reality looks, and how it actually looks. I google why a stunt is called a stunt, and find out that one meaning of the word is "to bring to an abrupt halt."



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Freja Sofie Kirk (b. 1990, DK) is a visual artist based in Copenhagen and Berlin. She graduated from the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts (2024) and has exhibited at venues including Von der Hoeden Contemporary, Hamburg (2025); NEVEN Gallery, London (2025); Inter.pblc, Copenhagen (2024); Simian, Copenhagen (2024); 5533, Istanbul (2023); and Copenhagen Contemporary (2022). Kirk has been awarded the Niels Wessel Bagge Art Foundation Honorary Grant (2024) and the Poul Erik Bech Foundation's Art Prize (2024).

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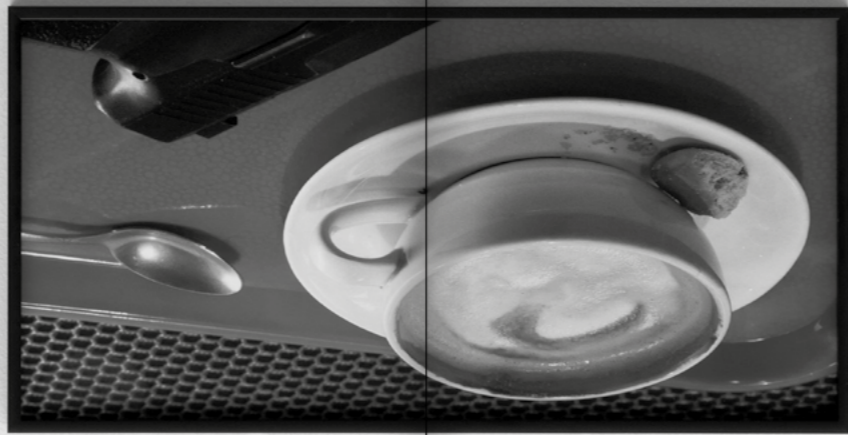
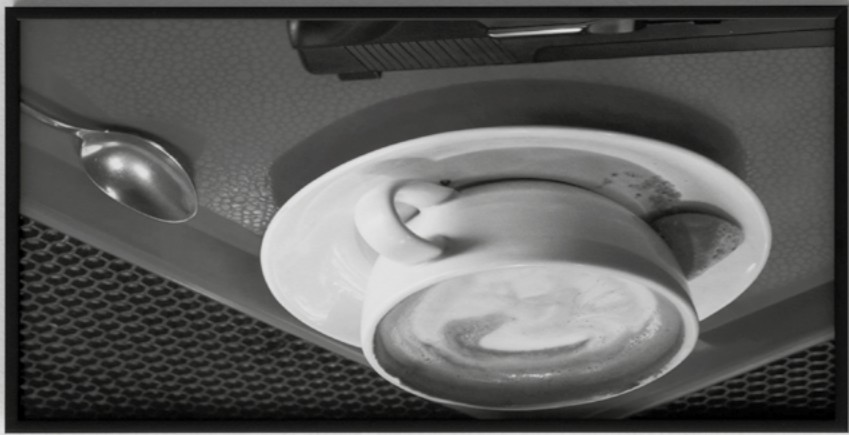












HVIS DET BLØDER, SÆLGER, DET

Elisa R. Linn

Denne praksis stammer fra kavaleries
militærtæning, hvor rytterne opøvede ekstreme
manøvrer i fuld galop for at blive mobile, kampklar
og svære at angribe – akrobatiske ridetekniker, der
sidenhen blev adopteret af eksempelvis det moderne
cirkus' grundlægger Philip Astley, som skabte
et underholdningsformat, hvor tidligere soldater
oprådte med militære versioner af trick-riding
i spektakulære shows. I dag er stunter ikke blot en
del af en popæret og romaniseret (og hvid) Vilde
Vesten-ikonografi, der er et symbol på det nationale
idealiserede fri-fugl-agtige ved den arkerypiske
helt, der har også rødder i militære undvigelses- og
overtraskelsesmanøvrer fra den såkaldte Dzshigtovka-
tradition. En form for trick-riding fra Kaukasus-
regionen, som senere blev formaliseret af kosakkerens
kavalerikultur – men ikke desto mindre er der tale om
en afstammingslinje, der for længst har vejet pladsen
til fordel for den misforståelse, at trick-riding er noget
"vestligt og autentisk amerikansk".

Som taget ud af Astleys hverdagsamfiteater og
katapletter ind i nut er det nu sådan, at den ene
medierede kroppsposition overtager den anden i
Kirkis film – kontrol er maskeret som tab af kontrol.
Death Drag-scenariet bliver efterfulgt af en sekvens,
hvor en gruppe mænd performer militæriseret
forsvarsmaskulinitet bevæbnet med rengøringsudstyr.
Nogen er klædt i t-shirts med gule ARMY-
bogstaver, andre i undertøj og sokker, andre andre
har camouflagovetrøj og solbriller på. De er frosset i
kampstilling, der ikke er spontane, men omhyggeligt
arrangeret, som om de med kammerat kredsende
rundt om sig øver sig på dens slags trummetrum, der
Foucault allerede bemærkede om sådanne følgende
(1975): "Soldaten er frem for alt en, der kan genkendes
på lang afstand"; hvilket ikke kun har at gøre med
uniformer og krig, men også med kontekster, hvor
militære logikker normaliseres gennem leg. Her
bliver den bergruede Bullet Time ikke blot et billede
på den digitale kontrol af tid og bevægelse – der,
hvor filmmediet bryder den indleksikale forbindelse
mellem tid og bevægelse – men en simuleret og
tidsligt manipuleret undvigelse af kuglen. Før eller
siden vil scenen som disse ikke kun vække kollektive
associationer til hørecheckstem mobilisering – såsom
Stormen på Kongressen den 6. januar 2021 – men
også aktualiserer det, som Klaus Theweleit kaldte "den
armerede krop" (Körperpanzer) i sin nærtværende

1. Se Neil Campbell, *The Rhizomatic West: Representing the American West in a Transnational, Global, Media Age* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008).
2. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, overs. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), 155–56.
3. Lev Manovich, "What Is Digital Cinema?", in *Post-Cinema: Theorizing 21st-Century Film*, red. Shane Denison og Julia Leyda (Palmer: REFRAAME Books, 2016), 3–11.
4. Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies: Volume 1: Women, Floods, Bodies, History*, overs. Stephen Conway, Erica Carter og Chris Turner (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

af mellemkrigsidens Freikorps som en slags psykisk
infrastruktur i proto-fascistiske sammenslutninger.
Fantasien om hårdhed, forseglede grænser og defensiv
usmidighed, der skal forblive inakt overfor mulige
trusler om opløsning (ofte kodet som feminine,
flydende eller kaotiske).

Som kontrast hænger Kirkis serie af glatte,
livsstilsagtige fotografer i udstillingsrummet
og ligner umiddelbart billeder af genkendelig
morgenrutinestilhed, som man så kan projicere et
begær i retning af. Ikke på trods af, men netop på
grund af deres højst almindelige og tillokkende
forbrugsæstetik. Den generiske kaffekop, præcis
som gennemsnitsforbrugerens kender den:
standardporcelæn, en halvpsit kiks liggende på
underkoppen, en lille ske på en rød serveringsbakke
eller en LED-doplys, ridset bardisk – uden
overflødighed og langt fra det kurerede og trendy
ved third wave-kaffekultur. Et kort øjeblik kan man
forestille sig at befinde sig inde i fotograferets scene, i
romantisk opslugt af 'mig-tid', alt imens en flygtig
formmelse af stabilitet opstår midt i en ellers
foruroligende, fremmedgjort verden. Ikke desto
mindre er billedet uadskilleligt fra den historiske
omsændighed, at kaffe blev den moderne, arbejdsdende
verdens drikk – en selvoptimerende stimulans i en
borgerlig, militærindustriel orden. I begyndelsen
af det moderne Europa blev kaffe en erstatning for
alkohol som fortrukken social drikkevarer, fordi den
skærpede opmærksomheden, bidrog til rationaliteten
og frem for alt kultiverede disciplinen.⁵ Ved nærmere
eftersyn udløser Kirkis fotografer med deres lidt
surteille skævtvridninger dog en slags metaforisk
"opvågnning". Man kommer til at tænke på agent
Dale Cooper, der igen og igen erklater, at "that is a
damn fine cup of coffee" i David Lynchs *Twin Peaks*,
hvor i sætningen fungerer som et tilbagevendende
symbolsk normaliseringsanker holdt op imod det
bagtæppe af uvirkelig rædsel, der har med stedet og
situationen at gøre. Også i Kirkis værker fremstilles
det tilsyneladende banale og harmløse motiv som
et subtilt og perifer, men stadig faretruende optin.
Koppen flankeres af et beskåret, funkende pistolgreb
og et magasin, der, ligesom chesky 007-teaser-
æstetik, ikke straks, men mere henkastet fanger
blikket. Våbnet er til stede selv i kaffepausen, hele
tiden lige ved hånden. Som Karl Marx for længst har
bemærket: varetøishismen fremmedgør produktet
fra deres faktisk brugsværdi og læser dem i stedet
med underliggende sociale, økologiske, økonomiske
forbindelser til selve produktionen af dem.⁶

5. Se Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Tastes of Paradise: A Social History of Spices, Stimulants, and Intoxicants*, overs. David Jacobson (New York: Pantheon Books, 1992).
6. Se Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Volume I, overs. Ben Fowkes (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1976), 163–77.

Angers *Kustom Kar Kommandos* fra 1965, hvor
der også tjener som subtil påmindelse om Kenneth
Angers *Kustom Kar Kommandos* fra 1965, hvor
forromede overflader, malerarbejde og andre tegn
på pjege isoleres og understrøges: Angers bil afbildes
aldrig som funktionelt transportmiddel, men er
ren overflade, rent begærsobjekt. Og det er netop,
hvad disse fotografer – taget fra SoMe-reklamer for
skydebaner – påpeger: markedsføringens af skyderi
som rekrativ eller social oplevelse, ikke blot som
træning og faciliteter. De tilbyder besøgende at prøve
mag kan tilbringe tid med familie og venner". Det er
derfor ingen overtraskelse, at de to figurer i Kirkis film,
klædt i hvide beskyttelsesdragter og gummihandsker, er
ikke er kriminallægeklinikker, der undersøger et
geningssted, men derimod er strukturelt indvævet
i selve processen i deres funktion af personale,
hvis opgave er at fjerne usynligt blystøv fra gulv og
gennemhullede vægge, hver gang denne trivialiserede
cafegtige fornøjelseskrig er overstået.

Kirkis udstilling kulegraver ikke blot den såkaldte
'militarismant'-industri – hvor volden siver ind
i banaliteten ved hverdagsfor nøjleser – men også
måderne, hvor på selve blikket bliver 'logistiseret',
altså adopteret militæroprøkkens geometri, som
eksempelvis Paul Virilio udtrykker det: hvordan
blikket skifter fra at observere til at angribe.
Cockpitets perspektiv eller kamerat, der stiller
skarpt, er ikke blot strukturerende for militære
praksisser; de former en visuel kultur som sådan.
Billedet bliver et kontrolværktøj til at skabe
mellemrum mellem strategiske overflader, hvor
modstanden er en markert silhuet. Beskueren
bliver på alle måder placeret i en rolle, der minder
om en operatør.⁷ Denne virkelighed understrøges
i *Pastimes* gennem spejlpåneler, der er monteret på
søjlerne i rummet; fragmenter, der ikke blot tjener
som model for måden, hvorpå subjekter skaber sig
selv gennem billeder, men også fremkaldet netop
den slags processer og blikke, som Kirkis arbejder
undersøger. I takt med, at netop beskueren i stigende
grad opfattes som en del af et apparaturdrevet system
i vores moderne techno-militære tidsalder. At se et
ikke længere blot lig med at opfatte; det har snarere at
gøre med at foregribe, at regne ud og projicere frem
i tiden – at se er allerede at angribe.
I vores scrollede, digitalt overvågede æra – hvor
linjer som "Have you ever tried this one?" fra Sabrina
Carpenters tilsyneladende uskyldige pophit *Juno* faktisk
anvendes til SoMe-propaganda for ICE-deportationer,
og hvor videoer af virkelig og brutal og racistisk vold
cirkulerer som en strategi til både rekruttering og
billedcirkulation – må man til sidst spørge, i hvor høj
grad det er et etisk problem for billedproduktionen.
Som Susan Sonag diskuterer i sit sidste essay *Regarding
the Pain of Others* (2003): Voldens moralske trykde

7. Se Paul Virilio, *War and Cinema: The Logistics of Perception*, overs. Patrick Camiller (London: Verso, 1989), 69–70, 73, 8. Ibid., 163.

RGADEN

OOOOO

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Pastimes
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O – OVERGADEN

Det er en stor fornøjelse at introducere denne publikation, der udkommer i forbindelse med Freja Sofie Kirks soloudstilling *Pastimes* på O – Overgaden. Over de seneste år har O – Overgaden med generøs støtte fra Augustinus Fonden produceret en publikationsrække, der udgives i forbindelse med kunsthallens soloudstillinger. Målsætningen med denne serie er at mangfoldiggøre samtalerne under og efter udstillingerne og åbne op for, at nyt materiale kan udspringe heraf.

I dette tilfælde har kurator og skribent Elissa R. Linn og kunstkritiker og redaktør for denne publikation Nanna Friis bidraget med hver sin tekst om lagene af skud i Freja Sofie Kirks arbejde – og de skal begge have en stor tak. Derudover vil jeg gerne takke hele O – Overgadens team for den store indsats i forbindelse med udstillingen, og naturligvis også fanfare, vores grafiske designere, for deres dedikerede arbejde på denne publikation. Sidst, men ikke mindst, en særlig tak til Freja for at dele sit materiale – fra koncept til udvalgte samtaler – med os alle sammen, både gennem udstillingen og denne publikation.

Den foruroligende sammenfiltring af begær og død i underholdningsindustriens billedsprag er central for Freja Sofie Kirks udstilling på O – Overgaden.

I et nyt vidcoværk udføres den ældgamle krigsmanøvre, der består i at falde af sadlen og lade, som om man er død – et stunt, der er blevet en fast bestanddel af nordamerikanske rodeoshows – af en professionel, kvindelig, trick rider, som filmes close-up. Scenens dels voldelige, dels hypnotiserende rus flyttes sammen med billeder af arbejdede i beskyttelsesdragter, der står ubevægelige midt i oprydningen af skimmende, gyldne patronhylstre på en forlystelsesskydebane, samt fundne optagelser af amerikanske soldater, der poserer for søv med koste i stedet for pistoler i en såkaldt Mannquinn Challenge, som var de frosset midt i kamp.

INTRODUKTION

Kameraet cirkulerer rundt i disse statiske scener: en hængende kvindekrop, stillestående rengøringspersonale og stivnede soldater. Alt sammen er del af en underholdningsindustri, hvor der både leges med døden og 'spilles' død – hvor både cameraet og pistolen skyder. Samtidig holder det korte, sømløse filmloop med dets lydspor af trommende hestehove os fangt i en tilstand, som, i modsætning til billedernes umiddelbart fortøende kvalitet, peger på gentagelsen, vedligeholdelsen, udmattelsen og en stille, mindre spektakulær dragnings mod døden.

Ligesom filmens kontinuerlige gentagelse reflekteres en serie nye fotografier i udstillingens spejlbeklædte søjler. Dette skaber en spejlsels effekt, hvor beskueren selv indgår i udstillingens billedverden. Motivverne, som er inspireret af skydebanernes selvpromovering på sociale medier, viser en kop kaffe og, ved siden af, de synlige kanter af et håndvåben samt, i de fleste billeder, en småkage. Billederne, der forener koffein, småkagens sukker og skydnings dopamin, fastholder således et rum, hvor fritid, nydelse og potentiel vold eksisterer side om side.

Både i dele af filmen og i fotografierne strækkes og forandres de oprindelige todimensionelle billeder til et tredimensionelt rum via et computergenereret billeik. Denne forunderlige, syntetiske effekt – hvor vi pludselig kan træde ind i billedets flade og for eksempel cirkulere rundt om kaffekoppen eller rundt om hesten og stuntkvinden, der er frosset midt i luften – gør fotografiet 'levende' og omdanner de fotografiske dokumenter til rum, vi kan bevæge os rundt i.

Rhea Dall
Leder og chefkurator på O – Overgaden,
marts 2026

