

RYAN LEE

RYAN LEE GALLERY LLC
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Anne-Karin Furunes

Together but Apart

June 19 - August 9, 2019

Opening Reception: Wednesday, June 19, 6-8

RYAN LEE is pleased to announce *Together but Apart*, an exhibition of new work by Anne-Karin Furunes. The exhibition will shed light on the increasingly urgent threat of climate change, particularly as the indigenous inhabitants of Fennoscandia, the Sámi people, experience it. *Together but Apart* includes a selection of portraits, landscapes, and monumental paintings rendered in Furunes's signature technique of perforated painted canvas.

Furunes' imagery is drawn from photographs housed at the Polar Archive at the Norwegian Polar Institute in Tromsø as well as the Sophus Tromholt Collection at the University of Bergen Library's Picture Collection—a world-famous archive of nineteenth-century images of the Sámi people taken during the first scientific expedition to study the Northern Lights. Though her paintings appear photographic, they are created entirely by hand through a process of meticulous perforation that mimics the looks of halftone printing. Furunes begins with a monochrome canvas. She then translates the photographic image to canvas by creating a constellation of perforated holes in varying sizes that allow for the passage of variable amounts of light. She alters each image to suit her vision, sometimes modifying the tone, perspective, and framing. Like photography, Furunes generates permanent images via the effects of light on a surface, though here the light remains unfixed and in constant dialogue with the surrounding environment.

Together but Apart calls attention to the imminent perils of unchecked climate change—a threat that refuses to slow its pace to match that of the acceptance of climate science worldwide. The large scale of the works—each is at least 5 x 5 feet—amplifies this urgent message. They recall efforts to recover a vintage image that, with each attempt at reproduction, become more fugitive. While the holes in their surfaces are physical indications of disappearance and loss, the images are enlivened by the fluctuation of the changing light. Furunes introduces color in a series of images of the melting *Calving Glacier*, based on photographs taken over the last fifteen years. Continuing her manual replication of the printing process, she creates stencils of perforations that she uses to hand-paint layers of cyan, magenta, and yellow dots on top of the monochrome canvas before adding the perforated holes. Depending on the position of the viewer and the quality of the light, Furunes' images become increasingly abstract.

The exhibition also seeks to redress centuries of mistreatment of the Sámi people, who are native to and whose culture is one of the oldest in the polar region. Like many native populations across the globe, the Sámi were devastated by settler colonialism—disenfranchised, robbed of their land, language, and their religion, and were required to attend boarding schools that would “re-educate” them in order to force assimilation into Norwegian society. Sámi culture and identity was systematically suppressed and erased until protest movements began in the late 1970s. Now, the Sámi people, who have lived harmoniously in the Arctic for centuries, are facing the threat of climate change. As Furunes explains, “the time has come to listen to what they can tell and teach us. Up to now we have made them listen to us.” Furunes' images, such as *Portrait of Mikkel Josefson Neckele* (2019) portray named Sámi individuals—a significant feature in her efforts to enhance the humanity of these “ethnographic” subjects. Her use of gray scale and simulation of

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the halftone style paradoxically enhance the presence of these long-absent figures.

As they oscillate between appearance and disappearance, Furunes' paintings both restore the history and humanity of the Sámi people, and evoke the fragility of the natural environment in which they live. The paintings halt, for a moment, the insidious processes that threaten the Sámi and ultimately us all, preserving a culture that is dissolving into memory nearly as rapidly as the planet's evaporating glaciers.

Anne-Karin Furunes (b. 1961, Ørland, Norway) is a leading artist of Scandinavia in painting and public commissions. Since 1992, Furunes has developed a signature technique of perforating canvas or metal that considers photographic and digital elements of space, light and material. The punctured holes in her canvases mimic the halftone process, most popularly used in periodicals, though Furunes does not employ a computer to create the image but composes it manually. Substituting ink for light, she creates a star pattern on a diagonal grid, cutting each hole by hand to create an image through the way the human eye perceives light. Furunes works from archival photographs, departing from the original she deliberately adjusts color, cropping, light and perspective. This method of removing in order to reveal complements Furunes' research-based practice that frequently focuses on forgotten histories and people, transforming archival photographs into portraits that emphasize an individual's experience.

Trained as an artist and architect, Furunes received her degree from the Trondheim Academy of Fine Art in Norway. Her work has been the subject of important solo shows at Kimen Cultural Centre at Stjørdal Kunstforening; Palazzo Fortuny, Venice; Millesgården, Stockholm; Västerås Konstmuseum, Sweden; Trondheim Kunstmuseum, Norway; and the University of Wyoming Art Museum, US. Large-scale commissions of her work have been realized at Oslo's Barcode Project, Deutsche Bank, Sydney; St. Olavs Hospital, Trondheim, the Trondheim Airport, and The National Theatre Station, Oslo, among others. She is represented in prominent public collections worldwide including Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki; Kistefos Museum, Norway; Museum of Arts and Design, New York; Museum of Art, Trondheim; National Museum Beijing; and National Museum of Contemporary Art, Oslo. Furunes lives and works in Stjørdal, Norway.

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