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Swedish Conditions

Rælingen Kunstforening 5. - 20. November 2022

Denne utstillingen tar utgangspunkt i steinen som et middel for kunstnerisk uttrykk. Steinen kan representere den materielle. The exhibition will show paintings made with filler embedded in oak panels.

The Norwegian expression "Swedish conditions" [svenske tilstander] is used to deter Norwegian public opinion from a more open and inclusive immigration and asylum policy. Language is used to shape reality instead of describing it. I moved from Sweden to Norway in the mid-90s and have observed from a distance the political climate changing in my home country. For me, the expression means something completely different. The neoliberal ideology has been given total hegemony on understanding reality. The Swedish welfare society - "folkhemmet" - I left has been demolished. I am not the only one with nostalgia for the culture we lost. But this sentiment has been grossly exploited by authoritarian and undemocratic forces. By activating fear of the foreign and unknown, latent in the remote and protected Sweden, they have cultivated it into pure xenophobia and racism. I no longer feel at home in Sweden.

A series of six paintings have the same name as the exhibition but with subtitles from different places in Sweden. These refer to the so-called "Easter riots" that occurred during the Muslim holiday of Ramadan this year. In the name of freedom of expression, a tour of racist and Islamophobic provocations was protected by the police but still met with violent protests. The paintings are made by throwing stones on the panels while the filler is wet. The series explores the phenomenon of symbolic violence. When symbolic actions have physical consequences, can they be understood as violence? Throwing stones is violent, but can perhaps be understood more as symbolic protest and resistance than a physical exercise of power?

The works in the exhibition are about various aspects of the Swedish that are equally valid for Norwegian conditions.