

PRESS RELEASE

ØYSTEIN AASAN. NEVER - THE - LESS

Critical text by Ory Dessau

Opening Saturday May 6th 2023 – from 5 pm to 9 pm

May 6th – July 29th, 2023

Galleria Enrico Astuni is pleased to present the solo exhibition *Øystein Aasan. Never-the-less*, with critical text in the catalogue by Ory Dessau, on display from April 22nd to July 29th, 2023.

This exhibition gathers about forty recent works – drawings, paintings, textual works, and sculptures – all done between 2020 and 2023. Among the works on display, three works belong to the *Inadequate Description* series (2021), while all others are from the *ONCE REMOVED* series on which Aasan has been working since 2019.

The *Inadequate Description* series, started by Øystein Aasan in 2004, is characterized by “**text based**” works, whose subject is the word reported in the form of “distorted text by various means or rendered almost illegible”, or deflagrated into individual letters that occupy the work’s spatial grid. Reading become inadequate or unfulfilling: the emphasis is placed on the gesture and the specific method of accomplishment.

In the case of the two charcoal works *Inadequate Descriptions, Uneyed no 2, 2021* and *Inadequate Descriptions, Erdlicht, 2021*, the artist follows a process that uses specific software and a computer-controlled cutter to create a new cut and reconstructed text, at times even illegible. Particularly interesting is the choice of two texts taken from poems by Paul Celan. A poet born in what is now Ukraine and whose entire family perished during the Holocaust. As an adult, Celan lived in France but continued to write in German, a language he did not speak very well but which was a way to remember his family and the horrors he had experienced.

In the work *Inadequate Descriptions, And look at one another, saying nothing, 2023*, Letraset transferable lettering was used, instead, to compose a poem by Rainer Maria Rilke. In reconstructing the text, the artist uses a single sheet of dry transfer letters, gradually remaining without some of them. Therefore, words remain progressively unfinished and are, little by little, literally missing, leaving in their place the deafening silence of emptiness.

ONCE REMOVED is a large and fascinating body of work that examines the theme of memory, which includes groups of paintings, works on paper, a series of small wooden models with specially made displays and containers with three new sculptures.

This series develops from input linked to specific childhood memories of visits with the family to abandoned military structures, such as the bunkers that make up the Atlantic Wall, once a barrier, today a collective memory from Paul Virilio’s book *Bunker Archaeology*, a text that remained in the artist’s consciousness for nearly a decade until it found access in the artist’s poetics at the end of 2019. What becomes fundamental for Aasan is the reuse and change of meaning according to the context that many of these structures have undergone over the years, transforming themselves in some cases, into memorials against the war. Personally experiencing the space of these underground structures – with their narrow passageways to vast cavernous spaces, shrouded in total darkness or lit by the sun through cracks in the bare concrete – generates in Øystein Aasan a set of ideas that he

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develops by transforming these unassailable constructions into **flexible, indefinitely repetitive and equal forms, beyond the time and space where they were built, beyond the ideology and auspices under which they were made and beyond the space that becomes vibrant and expansive.**

The methodology that distinguishes Øystein Aasan's practice in this body of work involves several steps – from the photo to the drawing, from the drawing to the wooden model, from the model to the staging in specifically made “optical chambers” – to finally arriving at its **purest form**, a silhouette that is analysed, transformed and re-proposed in different ways. In this manner, the Artist succeeds in achieving the ultimate goal of **subtracting form from context**, demonstrating that every architectural structure belongs, in its pure appearance, to a single broad collection of images that composes the collective memory.

Therefore, Øystein Aasan, with his *Never-the-less* exhibition in the halls of Galleria Enrico Astuni, seems to want to remind us of one of the most important laws, not only of science, but of the artistic invention as well: “nothing is lost, nothing is created, everything is transformed”. The genius lies in the intention, in the gap between function and beauty that distinguishes true Art.