

Marius Engh

STANDARD (OSLO), Oslo, Norway

On first sight, Marius Engh's exhibition 'Lycanthropic Chamber' gives a rather schizophrenic, cryptic impression. The title of the show, along with the press release's fragmented werewolf stories, on one side, and the actual works on display, on the other, seem to pull in a totally different directions. Faced with the sparse design of the objects, the viewer will, most likely, wonder where the werewolf has gone.

But appearances are deceptive, because Engh's monsters like to hide; monstrosity is present, just not in the form you expect it, appearing through seemingly unthreatening objects. But small distortions and repeated patterns reflect, it seems, the werewolf as a figure of cyclical change. While the objects mirror this capacity for alteration in man, they also develop their own 'werewolfism'. This is particularly striking in the photographic series 'Gulfstream 1-4' (2007), where four identical images of an aeroplane are accompanied by four different signatures. The context of the signed images is unclear, but the act of attaching names to shows their uniformity's vulnerability to external forces. *Pinstripes* (2008) is a triangular steel grid in which different geometrical patterns are repeated, while *Hotel California* (2008), a wall made of two semi-transparent sheets, makes everything on the other side appear as if in a heavy fog. While not a distortion in itself, *Hotel California* functions as a screen, transforming whatever might be on the reverse side into nocturnal and enigmatic shapes.

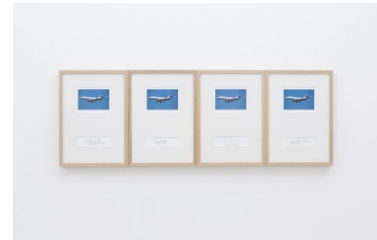
The initial dryness of the show eventually translates into a prism for the wildness of transformation, without exposing the eruptive force of lycanthropy itself. Dryness and minimalist design breaks, one might say, against instinct and impulse without directly illustrating it. This discreteness makes Engh an interesting contrast to David Altmejd, who works explicitly with werewolves as both material and expressionist baroque design. The latter's visually dense installation at Venice last year, *The Index* (2007), stands in stark contrast to Engh's guarded and indirect work, in which the lycanthropic circle of change quietly makes up the visible remains of the myth.

Even though the lunar frenzy is buried deep inside the gallery's white walls, Engh manages to distill the metamorphic essence of the werewolf myth as well as giving it a twist. An unconsciousness fueled and defined by savage fury lingers right beneath the cool surface of the show, pulling at the edges of the serenely restrained objects and giving them a thorough, though barely visible, shiver.

About this review

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