

THE NEW LANDS

SEPTEMBER 2ND – OCTOBER 16TH

EVA DRANGSHOLT

FEATURING: GEORGE KUCHAR & PAUL GAUGUIN

CURATED BY LINUS ELMES

UNGE KUNSTNERES SAMFUND • UKS.NO • LAKKEGATA 55D, OSLO

Sailing is not only about leaving it is also about returning ...

In the autumn of 1968 Donald Crowhurst set out from England in a plywood trimaran to take part in the first single handed non-stop round-the-world sailboat race. With little previous sailing experience, Crowhurst's boat was badly equipped and his home-made electronic gadgets unreliable. Only through persistence had he managed to persuade the judges to give him permission to take part in the race.

During the race Crowhurst radioed reports of record-breaking sailing performances on the Atlantic, but later he reported that low battery power led to radio silence throughout his sailing the Indian and Pacific oceans. Eleven weeks later, Crowhurst breaks the silence only to report to the world that he succeeded to round Cape Horn and proceeded to sail north for England towards victory and triumph.

But Crowhurst never showed up to the expected destination and his boat was found adrift in an eerie mid-Atlantic calm without her skipper. Crowhurst's story has become a legendary tale of a journey into the heart of darkness. It is an intricate play of identities and a haunting story about a complex, deeply troubled man.

His personal logbook turns totally delusional, increasingly desperate and reveals a man with no hope. At one point he gave voice to his melancholy through a mathematical formula:

$$\begin{matrix} + & \infty \\ - & \infty \end{matrix} \int \text{Man} = [\text{o}] - [\text{o}]$$

Calling it the Cosmic Integral, Crowhurst intended it to mean that the summation of man from minus infinity to plus infinity is nothing – or, in general terms, that mankind, over the whole course of time, adds up to a blank null.

Eva Drangsholt's *The New Lands* originates from her own sailing experience along the American West Coast, although it might as well have begun on April 6th, 1891, when an ill, tired and poor Paul Gauguin embarked on a four-month journey by sea from Marseilles to the island of Tahiti. He had left not only his family behind but also an insane Vincent van Gogh with whom he spent a summer of painting in Arles. Their friendship ended in a dramatic fight over unreturned love that deprived van Gogh of his ear.

Gauguin's struggle to pursue a life of artistic purity on Tahiti marked the end of his tragic life as a bourgeois stockbroker, family man, and amateur painter in Europe. "I do not hold his vermilion background against him [...] I hold it against him that he failed to apply his synthesis to our modern philosophy, which is absolutely social, anti-authoritarian and anti-mystical" - wrote art critic Albert Aurier about Gauguin.

In the 1950's George Kuchar together with his brother Mike started an experimental journey with home-made Super-8 and 16mm melodramas that would contribute to the genre of Camp. Leonard Lipton has called Kuchar's films overtly insane and speculated on their ability to drive one insane. Lipton wrote that: "the Marx Brothers might survive them but he doubts it. But the utter insanity, the insanity of perverted cliché, is the genuine unwholesome appeal of Kuchar's outlook." *Corruption of the Damned* (1965) is pervaded with twisted violence and sex. Kuchar's casting of friends and family is a key to his orchestration of this human drama.

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Humans don't search for relationships as little as we search for air to breath. We are constructed for relationships and cannot exist without them. The human psyche has a contextual nature and is affected in the constantly ongoing process of our current relationships. For a single-handed sailor, even the loneliness stands in relation to the context. Loneliness is experienced in relation to self-image and the image of the surrounding world. It reflects both previous relationships and present interactions with others. In other words, we are our own experiences.

Gauguin shared his fascination for the exotic and uncontaminated with other French artists and intellectuals at the time like Rousseau and Baudelaire. An ideal of the tropics said by Hal Foster to be inspired in part by "native villages" that were set up like zoo displays of indigenous peoples at the 1889 Universal Exhibition in Paris. The other as a study object in Gauguin's practice omens other narratives like Aldus Huxley's *Brave New World* and Robert J. Flaherty's cinematic salvage ethnography in *Nanook of the North*.

Eva Drangsholt has followed this trajectory into a new terrain. She interviews John Nielsen, a temporary acquaintance she met during her own sailing ventures along the American west coast. Drangsholt has not hesitated to leave her secure position behind the lens. She invited John Nielsen to practice his incarnated aesthetic ritual of stone balancing in the exhibition. By entering into this social contract with him, she puts her own project at risk. Her own influence to the New Lands is out of control and in the hands of others, into a parallel narrative where Eva, like Crowhurst is a double agent with dual logbooks.

Eva relies on her outsider position as a transsexual in an act of seeing and documenting her journey. A position Crowhurst delicately touches upon several times during his last journey, not at least in his fable *The Misfit*: "Poor bloody misfit! A giant albatross, its great high-aspect wings sweeping like scimitars through the air with never a single beat slid effortlessly round the boat in mocking contrast to his ill-adapted efforts of survival."

This is where we are now, in constant movement ...

Works in exhibition:

Eva Drangsholt (b. 1962)

- i. John Nielsen rock installation (2011) variable sizes
- ii. The New Lands (2011) Video 16:35 Min

George Kuchar (b. 1942)

Corruption of the Damned (1965) B/W 51 Min
Courtesy of the artist

Paul Gauguin (1848 - 1903)

- i. Les drames de la mer (1889)
- ii. Les Cigalez et lez fourmiz (1889)
- iii. untitled (1889)

All zincographies from the Volpini suite