

Fatness as a Queerness – an artist talk about fatness as a queerness, as it relates to religion and myth

By Tore Hallas

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With the basis in the award-winning work 'And Going After Strange Flesh' as well as a new video work under production, I will talk about the process of creating visual art in the intersectionality of religion, myth, sexuality and body. How travelling shapes the creative process, the relationship between the body and the place, and how religious myth of a location shapes the physical experience of it. But there is also a very current political aspect. The othered body - the fat, the handicapped, the non-white, etc - is subject to discriminations often rooted in a religiously based attempt at morality, illustrated in systemic discrimination. Asceticism as opposed to the symbolism of fatness as justification for shaming, or the condemnation of homosexuality based in the the myths of Sodom in the abrahamic religions. I am in Athens to take a look at the Ancient Greek arts and religions relationship to these themes of body as the ultimate signifier of morality.

“‘And going after strange flesh’ is a fragment from a passage in the Bible that describes the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah surrendering to fornication and, according to some accounts, possibly homosexual relations. Tore Hallas takes this reading of the passage as the premise for his two-screen film piece that explores questions of shame in relation to male homosexuality and fatness. Working with simplified imagery in the style of contemporary portraiture and the travelogue, Hallas scrutinises the intersection of male homosexuality, race and fatness. In a heteronormative culture, both homosexuality and fatness are stigmatised, and the latter is equally stigmatised in mainstream gay culture. Hallas sets out on his search for an understanding of this particular shaming in the context of the religiously loaded location of the ancient city of Sodom. The title refers to homosexual sexual desire or desire for otherness, which, in the context of the scripture, can be seen as a desire for the divine and has also been interpreted as lust for angelic figures. Hallas approaches these myths, claims and uncertainties about religious meaning and historical events as storytelling tools, detouring them towards the personal and sexualised struggles of the ideological everyday.” *Curators Katarina Stenbeck (The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts) & María Berríos (Berlin Biennale, MACBA).*

Tore Hallas is a visual artist based in Copenhagen, Denmark. Working within themes of fatness and queerness, and fatness as queerness; religious ontologies and intention; as well as photographic and cinematographic reflection as both theme and method. Primarily with video, photography and text, as well as teaching with a focus on empathetic feedback. Holds an MFA from The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts 2019 and is the recipient of the Danish Arts Councils 'The Young Artistic Elite', as well as the Poul Erik Bech Foundations Art Prize and the 15. Juni Foundations Honorary Art Prize and has exhibited nationally in Denmark and internationally within Europe and the United States.

