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Hanne Nielsen and Birgit Johnsen: *Particles* Ormston House



Hanne Nielsen and Birgit Johnsen, *Particles* (still), 2023. Two-channel video installation. Courtesy of the artists.

April 28, 2023

Hanne Nielsen and Birgit Johnsen

Particles

April 29–June 24, 2023

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Ormston House

9-10 Patrick Street

Limerick

Ireland

Hours: Wednesday–Saturday 12–6pm

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Ormston House proudly presents *Particles*, the first exhibition by internationally renowned Danish video artists Hanne Nielsen and Birgit Johnsen in Ireland. For more than three decades, Hanne Nielsen and Birgit Johnsen have focused on the powerful influence of media images in society. The artists say: “We want to create a frame for reflection on current global, critical conditions as well as the ethical, existential choices confronting us today. We often perform ourselves in our works; we believe that the performative connects the personal with the political.”

In their new two-channel video installation, the artists perform as bird-like figures beamed down from somewhere in the universe. Together, they travel through Tarkovsky-inspired scenes—an abandoned fun park, a ravaged industrial site, overgrown castle ruins, a rocky landscape, burning fields. They are female clones of the plague doctor and the future scientist, equipped with all kinds of measuring tools. Drones are deployed to provide the vertical perspective they need to travel through time and space, and to unfold a machine-vision, flying in abrupt movements, watching, searching, monitoring, and disappearing into the sky.

Crosscut with TV and internet footage, the installation presents a range of different “reflection rooms” where clips of historical and recent events are intertwined with personal and mythical interpretations through the plague doctor’s crystal ball. While particles in the form of dirt, smoke, or fog may refer to climate change, pollution, poverty, war, or even a lack of transparency in antidemocratic processes, particles in the sense of aeolian dust are also the precondition for existence. The doctor and the scientist mediate seemingly chaotic conditions and continue their journey seeking signs of life and measuring the state of our planet.

About the artists

Hanne Nielsen (b. 1959) and Birgit Johnsen (b. 1958) have an international reputation for artistic excellence and are recipients of numerous awards, including the new Carlsberg Foundation Art Award, the Carl Nielsen and Anne Marie Carl-Nielsen Award, and the prestigious Eckersberg Medal. Their investigative and experimental approach to video has given them pioneer status on the Danish art scene.

The artists’ work spans from modest single screens to major filmic productions, studio recordings, and documentary explorations presented in immersive installations. Nielsen and Johnsen have collaborated since 1993 and have exhibited widely in Denmark and abroad, as well as participating in film festivals around the world. They have depicted the world we live in with visual poetry, with humour, and with a persistent commitment to feminist political issues. In 2021, they received a lifetime achievement award from the Danish Arts Council.

About Ormston House

Ormston House is a meeting place for the arts in the heart of Limerick city, Ireland. Our programme is co-designed with artists and citizens, resulting in community partnerships, multi-annual projects, and cultural events that are responsive to the city and its context. We have developed a participatory model to connect curatorial practice with local knowledge and activism.

Particles is kindly supported by the Arts Council of Ireland, the Danish Arts Foundation, and Aarhus Kulturudviklingspulje. The exhibition is curated by Mary Conlon.



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