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MATIAS FALDBAKKEN – *I DON'T THINK SO*

September 8th through October 27th 2007

Over the past number of years, Oslo-based Matias Faldbakken has been simultaneously active in the fields of literature and contemporary visual art. Collectively, his work has offered a sustained questioning of the potential of artistic intervention to disrupt the capitalistic and moral systems underlining contemporary culture. These questions have come largely through his focus on the relationships between violence, spectacle, negation, entertainment, and politics.

As a writer, he is perhaps best known for the two novels in his soon to be finished Misanthropy Trilogy, written under the alias Abo Rasul. Titled *The Cocka Hola Company* and *Macht und Rebel*, they have developed a cult following in Europe for their satirical exploration of the vicious behavior of underground societies and the subversive manipulations performed by people within them.

Parallel to this literary project, Faldbakken has also been forging unlikely alliances between conceptual usages of language with more vernacular gestures of vandalism and appropriation. His output has been exceedingly diverse, having worked in video, wall painting, sculpture, installation, and photography. Earlier bodies of work have focused on a range of topics including: counterfeit “supernotes”, political graffiti, celebrity suicides, and the entertainment industry. Yet throughout this oeuvre there is a unifying and subversive humor that heightens the tension between the rational and the absurd.

For his Midway exhibition, *I Don't Think So*, Faldbakken is presenting a recently completed body of new work. Prominent within the installation are two large-scale photographic works that are pasted like billboard advertisements to the gallery walls. Radically dialed back on content, the images are enlarged digital scans of the margins and ads of newspapers. Through this zeroing out, the reverse text from the back side of the originals gain (an albeit illegible) prominence amidst the overall pattern of visual static picked up via the scans.

This concentration on how the literal margins that exist in print determine the limits of the textual or pictorial “content” of news and advertising, offers insight into Faldbakken’s ongoing method of defining something by its negative or its inverse. As he has written, “If Eskimo’s have two hundred ways to say ‘snow’, I want a million ways to say ‘no’.” While his work has rightly been

seen through the historic lens of the détournement strategies developed by the Situationists, Dada, or Punk, his current historic affiliations is beginning to lean more towards a figure such as Ad Reinhardt and the negative litany he created through the combination of empty images and negativistic texts.

This new detour, which could be characterized as a more classical approach, continues in a series of “taped” drawings and paintings. In these, segments of black electrical tape stutter phrases such "NOT IN A MILLION YEARS". Yet when encountering this work, one must keep in mind that with Faldbakken’s open-ended use of language, the opposite of any statement offers as true a conclusion as the original. Ultimately, on this occasion, “IN A MILLION YEARS” offers as much consolation as its negation.

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Matias Falbakken was born in 1973 and studied at the National Academy of Fine Arts, Bergen and at the Stadelschule in Frankfurt am Main. He has had solo exhibitions at STANDARD (OSLO); Galerie Diana Stigter, Amsterdam; Schnittraum, Cologne; and Bergen Kunstahall, Bergen. He has exhibited widely in group exhibitions at venues including: PS1, New York; Kunst-Werke, Berlin; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; the Whitney Museum, New York; and the Frankfurter Kunstverein, Frankfurt am Main. In 2005, Faldbakken represented Norway at Nordic Pavillion in the 51st Venice Biennale. This summer, Christoph Keller Editions published a monograph on his work entitled *Not Made Visible*. He is represented by STANDARD (OSLO).