

Sofia Hultén

Here's the Answer, What's the Question?

13 September – 26 November 2017



Sofia Hultén *Speculative Fiction* (2016) Five metal poles, bicycle frames, bicycle locks, paint. Courtesy the artist and VH Bildkunst

I am really interested in the question of origin – where something starts, something ends, what the starting point of an action is, for example. I am interested in the fact that at the point when I come in with the object, it already has a history. That gives me something to work with.

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Ikon announces the most comprehensive exhibition to date by Berlin-based artist Sofia Hultén (b. 1972 Stockholm): *Here's the Answer, What's the Question*. A judicious selection of sculptures, installations and films, the exhibition conveys an ongoing preoccupation with the nature of the material world and the way we navigate it through time.

With an engaging thoughtfulness, Hultén's work exemplifies her conviction "to believe that everything is in flux and that change is always possible." For Hultén, time is a fourth dimension that conflates art objects with their subject matter in a "looping" process. Objects often become material and vice versa, so that readymades become re-made, in a way that not only challenges widely accepted definitions of art but also what we think we know more generally.

Hultén uses objects found on the streets, or discarded and unwanted abject materials - reinforcing the idea of looking twice at what is all-too-often taken for granted. There is humour in a seemingly absurdist *arte povera*, and political connotation in an assertive resistance to preciousness, but above all, for Hultén, it is a question of communicating "how she sees objects ... as [a] whirling mass of 'What could I be?', 'What have I been?', 'What is inherent within me?'. Inside every particle there's the potential for an incredible amount of energy."

In this vein, there is atomisation that occurs in much of Hultén's work, evident in a shuffling and reshuffling of constituent parts of found objects. In 2011 she made *Two Hundred to One*, in which a one centimetre unit was cut out from each of two hundred found yellow measuring sticks and combined to make one stick measuring over two metres. Other works involve the pulverisation of an object from which a mould has been made and then the resulting granular material is recast to make a replica of what she started with; *Artificial Conglomerate* (2010) is thus a sculpture of a rock made out of its own rocky material, and *Particle Boredom* (2017), similarly, are sculptures of pieces of fibreboard – so commonplace - remade from their own fibre.

The emphasis on process in Hultén's work reminds us that time is a vital factor in the equation of artistic experience. As she shuffles material, literally, in between incarnations of an object, she also alters and rearranges their chronological order. This process lies at the heart of video works such as *Nonsequences* (2013), in which a succession of events is re-enacted to defy expectations of cause and effect. For example, one sequence sees an apple being polished on jeans, eaten, dropped into dirt then disposed of in a plastic bag. In another, the apple is placed in the bag before being eaten, then dropped in dirt and so on. In the same way *Nonsequences IV* (2014) involving a laptop and a takeaway, similarly disrupts an assumed linear progression of occurrences and the results are frankly funny, at times reminiscent of *Fawlty Towers*-style slapstick comedy.

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Hultén has made a number of sculptural pieces and installations that likewise pose a challenge to what we think we know through permutation. For example, in *Speculative Fiction* (2016) the artist presents us with combinations and recombinations of the same objects such as bicycle parts - locks, wheel-like hoops and frame - referring to such a scenario as the simultaneous presentation of different versions "of accidental events [...] re-enacted in varying order of causality". Such works provide us with answers, for which we then have to make up the corresponding questions. The viewer is positioned in the realm of known unknowns, where common sense – with its straightforward assumption of perceived experience as real– no longer holds sway.

ENDS

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Nonsequences, 2013



Pattern Recognition, 2017

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Immovable Object, Unstoppable Force, 2011



Truckin, 2015

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Reality Plural, 2017

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Particle Boredom III, 2017

Social Media Handles:

Instagram, Twitter and Facebook: @ikongallery #IkonGallery

Note to Editors:

1. Sofia Hultén was born in Stockholm, Sweden in 1972 and moved to Birmingham, England as a child. After her foundation course at Bournville College of Art (Birmingham) she trained as a sculptor and graduated from Sheffield Hallam University in 1995. Sofia now lives and works in Berlin, Germany.
2. This exhibition is organisation in collaboration with Museum Tinguely, Basel
3. Ikon exhibition opening: 13 September 2017, 6-8pm.
4. Ikon is an internationally acclaimed contemporary art venue situated in central Birmingham. Established in 1964 by a group of artists, Ikon is an educational charity and works to encourage public engagement with contemporary art through exhibiting new work in a context of debate and participation. The gallery programme features artists from around the world and a variety of media is represented, including sound, film, mixed media, photography, painting, sculpture and installation. Ikon's off-site programme develops dynamic relationships between art, artists and audiences outside the gallery. Projects vary enormously in scale, duration and location, challenging expectations of where art can be seen and by whom. Education is at the heart of Ikon's activities, stimulating public interest in and understanding of contemporary visual art. Through a variety of talks, tours, workshops and seminars, Ikon's Learning Team aims to build dynamic relationships with audiences, enabling visitors to engage with, discuss and reflect on contemporary art.
www.ikon-gallery.org
5. Ikon is open Tuesday – Sunday and Bank Holiday Mondays, 11am - 5pm. Admission is free. Ikon Gallery is supported using public funding from Arts Council England and Birmingham City Council. For the latest news and events follow @ikongallery on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).
6. For more information or high-res images please contact Neil Anderson, Head of Communications (Maternity Cover) or Emily Luxford, Marketing Manager at Ikon on 0121 248 0708 or email n.anderson@ikon-gallery.org or e.luxford@ikon-gallery.org

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