

HENRIK STRÖMBERG

solo exhibition

*"BYGONES BE BYGONES OR:
WHAT'S HIDDEN IN THE SNOW WILL COME TO
LIGHT BY THAW"*

Curated by Chiara Valci Mazzara and Susanne Prinz

April 27 - June 3rd, 2023

*Kunstverein am Rosa - Luxemburg Platz,
Linienstraße 40 - 10119, Berlin, DE*



The show *Bygones be bygones or: what's hidden in the snow, will come to light by thaw* explores the ephemeral existence of humanity in relation to its transient, increasingly collapsing environment. To keep and let go, to hold on only to forget, to rediscover and reassess, the loss of memory, the discovery of proofs of our cultural heritages, the constant development of new technologies and the decay of the environment are all pivotal topics in the research of Henrik Strömberg.



A landscape of amphora-shaped glass bodies populate the space, combined and accumulated with recovered construction elements, plaster, metal and coal to create an expansive installation in which the sculptural volumes contain found objects, collected and reused materials, and lost, found and repurposed artifacts: burned notebooks and newspapers, corals and branches, roots...vessels of the proofs of memory, history, past and present, socio-political entanglements.



Installation view. Ph @ Henrik Strömberg

Silence

Let us for a moment imagine the Earth without humans. At first, we would be probably struck by overwhelming peculiar silence resulting from the lack of civilisational noise produced by numerous machines which “support” and “enhance” man’s existence. Henrik Strömberg’s exhibition in Berlin’s Rosa-Luxemburg Kunstverein “Bygones be bygones or: what’s hidden in the snow will come to light by thaw” offers this kind of speculative vision of a post-world: almost a museum-like space presenting remnants extracted from human existence, yet without humans themselves. The proverb referred to in the title – “Let bygones be bygones” – seems to be implying that there is an option to cross off the past with a thick line and start everything anew. This would entail that the secret dream of contemporary humanity, the craving for a second chance after its practices have irreversibly destroyed large parts of the world, could actually come true. However, the provocatively reverberating rhyme referring to another proverb of Swedish provenance: “what’s hidden in the snow will come to light by thaw” does not leave any illusions. Its perceptible sense of predestined, yet inscrutable fate calls to mind gloomy fairy tales written by the Grimm brothers. The sinister inevitability of the future is challenging us to start facing the consequences of the anthropocentric domination of the Earth right now...

Vacuum

In his sculptural objects Strömberg employs glass and found materials. Repurposed artifacts, among which scraps of burned newspapers, a piece of rope, a plastic bag, a broken branch, are the actual remnants of human ephemeral existence. Their almost ritual extraction into glass capsules performed by the artist provides manifold possibilities of interpretation. For glass as a recyclable material carries an important environmental impact. It functions as a capacious symbol in culture as well. A magnifying glass represents the power of reason and intellect, self-awareness, examination, and self-reflection. Some believe that the future can be seen in a ball made of glass. Glass can become a vacuum, a protective shield, however, its transparency doesn’t separate an object entirely from its surrounding, allowing to scrutinize it from the outside. In his novel “The Spring to Come”, the Polish neoromantic writer, Stefan Żeromski, used the motif of “glass houses” to describe an idealistic utopia based on a perspective of the future world characterized by sustainability, equality and overall satisfaction. However, due to its unattainability this perfect state of being soon became a symbol of disappointment and a source of decadent spleen.

Slow-motion

The glass capsules exhibited together with abstract looped films focused on a single poetic visual frame, introduce the prevailing feeling of suspension in slow-motion. Might this archeology of the quotidian, the banal, the accidental, be an invitation to slow down and reflect on how misleading the conviction of the anthropocentric supremacy in fact is when juxtaposed with the geological solidity of the Earth or the eternity of time? This particular impression of transiency and fragility of man’s life was well-captured by Erasmus of Rotterdam who compared it with a fleeting bubble – a motif which was so eagerly developed in 17th-century Dutch painting. This eschatological sense of vanitas linked to the concept of homo bulla (the man as a bubble) is also pervading Strömberg’s work. Yet, this melancholy can be as well interpreted just as a temporary state of apathy in anticipation of inspiration (cf. Albrecht Dürer’s famous print), thus motivating the search for alternative solutions and visions of the world.

Third landscape

The poetic-esthetic wasteland created by Strömberg is, however, far from the usual concept of anthropized dystopic future. Constituting a kind of a non-place, a space in between, it carries a potential to become what Gilles Clément calls a “third landscape”. It is understood as an environment that evolved from neglected lands (nature reserves) which due to the abandonment of human activity became proper grounds for the development of pioneer species as the vanguard of new permanence on Earth, based on diversity, shared consciousness, and deep sense of collectivity. Thus, Strömberg’s glass capsules containing miniature worlds might as well serve as the agents of new ecosystems, advocating the idea of the self-regenerative power of the Earth and its unique ability to constantly, naturally reinvent itself. This perspective would also be related with the artist’s long-standing exploration of the nature of compost, interpreted as an alternative optimistically-charged mode of being based on regeneration. After all, hasn’t the humanity come to the point in which it needs a life-saving message in the bottle that could bring hope to its members – the deluded outcasts of their own civilization?



Henrik Strömberg, from the series: "infinity start-line in volume Nr.#", hand blown glass volumes, vintage newspaper ashes, roots system part, black pigment, 2023

Installation view. Ph @ Henrik Strömberg



Henrik Strömberg, from the series: "infinity start-line in volume 01",
hand blown glass volumes, vintage newspaper ashes, roots system
part, black pigment, 2023

Installation view. Ph @ Henrik Strömberg

Henrik Strömberg, from the series: "infinity start-line in volume 02", hand blown glass volumes, vintage newspaper ashes, roots system part, black pigment, 2023

Installation view. Ph @ Henrik Strömberg





Henrik Strömberg, form the series "strata volume Nr.#", hand blown glass volumes, newspapers and vintage newspaper ashes, 2023

Installation view. Ph.@ Henrik Strömberg



Henrik Strömberg, from the series: "infinity start-line in volume 03", hand blown glass volumes, vintage newspaper ashes, roots system part, black pigment, 2023

Installation view. Ph @ Henrik Strömberg

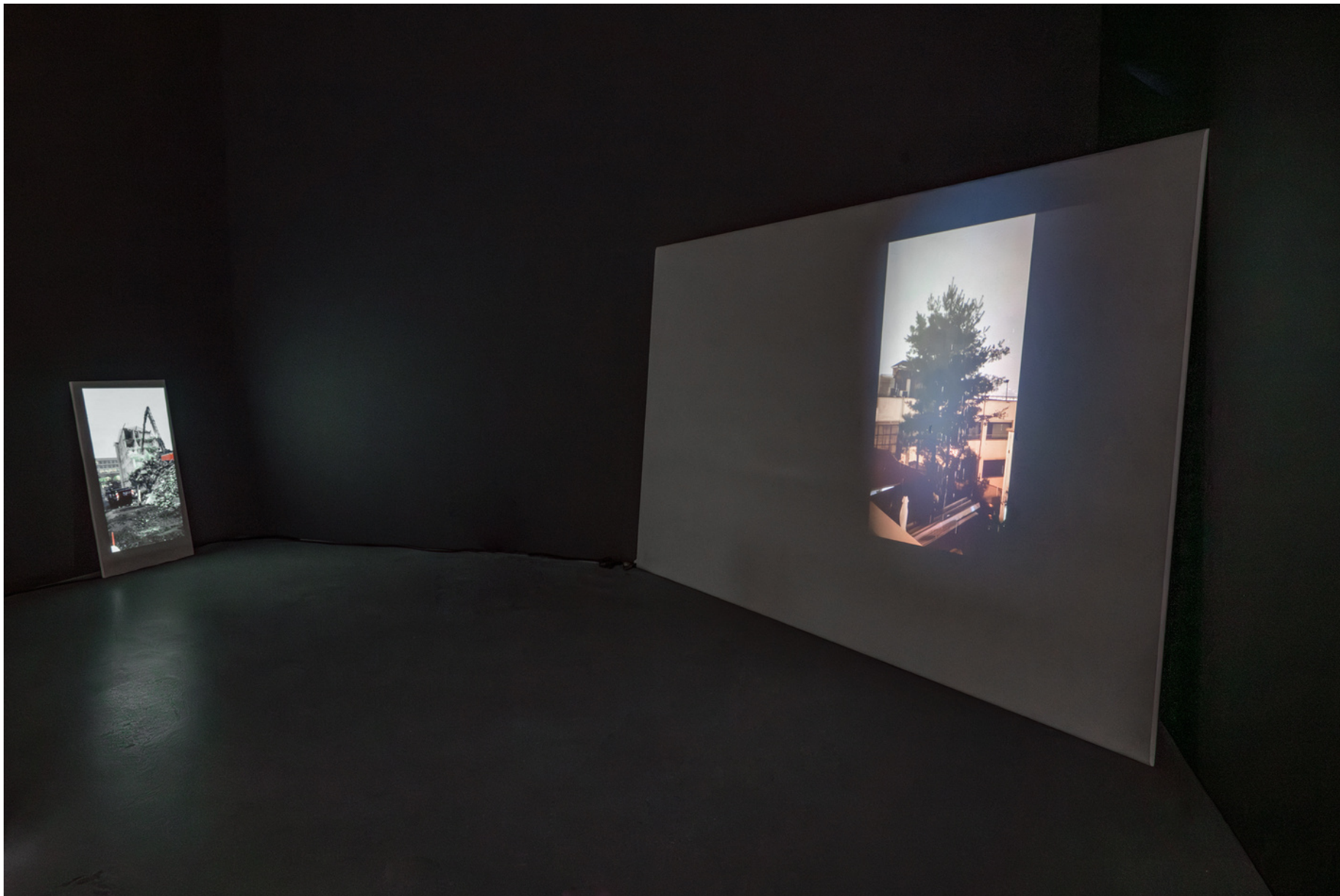


Henrik Strömberg, "strata volume 03", hand blown glass volumes(x2), newspapers and vintage newspapers ashes, photographic films, (assembled piece)45x28ø cm ca, 2023

Ph. Henrik Strömberg

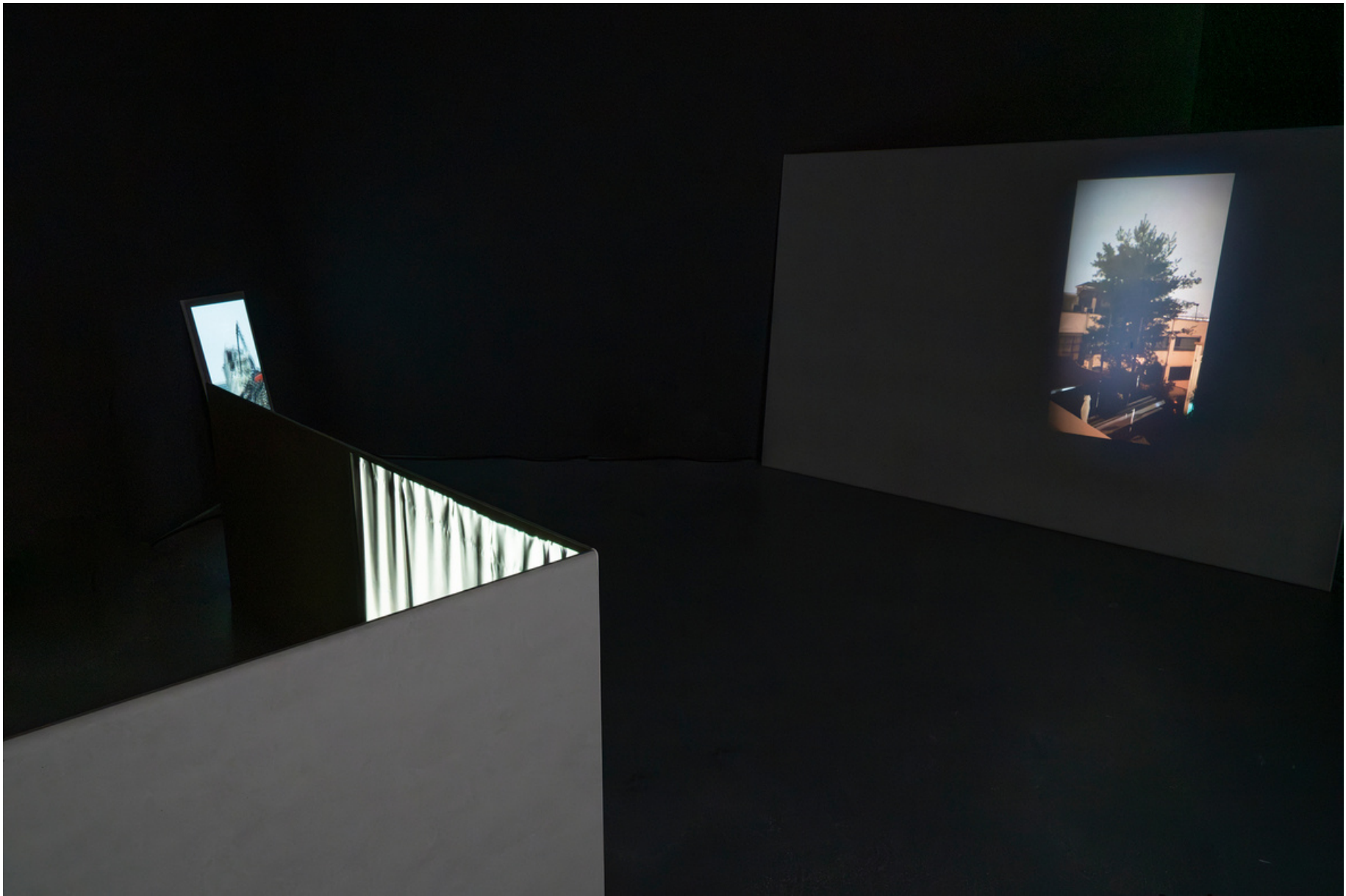


Henrik Strömberg, "2nd afterlife", hand blown glass volume, vintage newspaper ashes, coral, wooden structure, photographic film and scenography canvas,(assembled piece) 161x90x60 cm ca, 2023
Installation view. Ph.@ Henrik Strömberg



Henrik Strömberg, “continuing in your tracks”, multi-channel video and sound installation, consisting of 3 video works - projected on insulation plaster boards, variable dimensions, 2023, 3/3+1 AP, 2022/23

Installation view. Ph. @ Henrik Strömberg



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Installation view. Ph. @ Henrik Strömberg



Henrik Strömberg, "suspended gravity hold 02", hand blown glass volume, rope (2x), vintage paper sheet, 23x12x14 cm ca, 2023

Installation view. Ph. @ Henrik Strömberg



Part of the show is a program of performances and readings which takes place on the stage of a bar counter structure: the “Bygones be Bygones Bar” conceived and realised by the artist for the project. The structure is a modular sculpture consisting of a repurposed wooden structure, with shelves made of isolation plaster boards on which hand blown glass volumes and glassware - produced to serve the drinks- are organised. Every other Friday, conversations will be initiated through performative readings and talks. Henrik Strömberg prepares gin and tonics for invited guests and while the ice cubes are melting in the glasses - after the performances- conversations are about the same phenomenon at the poles, about viruses and microorganisms, about memory and loss, about landscapes, borders, sense of belonging and much more.

Installation view. Ph.@ Henrik Strömberg



Henrik Strömberg, "creature comforts" hand blown glassware , variable measurements, 2023

Ph. @ Henrik Strömberg



Among the various pieces on the bar shelve system :
Henrik Strömberg, "infinity start-line in volume 05", hand blown glass volume, root system portion, black pigment, 21x 11x8 cm ca, 2023

Ph. @ Henrik Strömberg



Henrik Strömberg, "Suspended gravity hold 01", Hand blown glass volume, repurposed synthetic packaging cloth, rope, 42x22x21cm ca, 2023

Ph. @ Henrik Strömberg

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