

# A K Dolven

## *please return*

### 4 February – 19 April 2015

Ikon is pleased to present a new exhibition of work by A K Dolven, one of Norway's most prominent artists. Through a variety of media - painting, photography, film and sound - she is concerned essentially with the representation of sublime natural forces. In this respect she identifies with the renowned nineteenth century Norwegian painter Peder Balke (1804 - 87), whose work is also included in the exhibition.

In his landscapes of northern Norway, Balke's human subjects are dwarfed by their circumstances, as small figures in the landscape, or their presence is implied by modest dwelling places or boats often being tossed around in rough seas. Whilst sharing Balke's world view, Dolven's vision is more overtly philosophical, dealing with the nature of perception and the subconscious functioning of memory and emotions. It is significant that she focuses on densely multisensory situations, in which her main subject is at once very present and resonant with lost time.

Born in Oslo in 1953, studying in Paris and Berlin before establishing a London studio, Dolven now divides her time between the UK and Norway. In *selfportrait Berlin February 1989 - Lofoten August 2009* (2010), an 8mm film on video, we see her in a telling dialogue with herself across time. The earlier footage was shot in West Berlin, overlooking the river Spree which, in early 1989, was part of East Berlin. Standing cold and naked, as she turns the camera around her waistline until the roll of film is used up, all the time she is being watched by East German border police. The later footage, filmed twenty years on, features the artist making the same gesture with a camera on a mountain top in northern Norway, in the white light of an arctic summer night, overlooking the sea.

This self portrait is ostensibly an artwork about the world beyond whilst being centred on the artist, and her place in time. Likewise, *when I discovered the end I wanted to live really long* (2013) is unashamedly self-referential whilst touching on the mortality that defines us all. Back-projected onto a small screen at the end of a long corridor, free standing in the exhibition space, the whiteness in the film turns into movements of a body at a very low temperature, its nervous rhythm in synch with *Cold Genius*, an aria by British composer Henry Purcell that includes the words "Let me, let me freeze again to death".

*Vertical on my own* (2011), made with 16mm film, is a video installation by Dolven that depicts a long horizontal shadow, opening and closing, thrown onto a surface of brilliant white snow in an arctic winter. The figure throwing the shadow is unseen, but his or her verticality, literally, is vital. The aesthetic result is as reassuring as it is beautiful, signifying consciousness at a location that can be pinpointed - where verticality and horizontality meet - and strength sufficient to survive in adverse circumstances.

A new series of paintings allude to Balke through their medium - the layered application of colour on aluminium panels, small scale and minimalist. But rather than representing bleak landscape, the mix of gesso, cadmium orange and white oil paint results in a human skin tone. In other works, darkness with a glimpse of light radiating through is represented. The panels bear the wounds of hammer blows, struck hard by the artist into the surfaces that she has carefully prepared. These are the emphatic traces of an artistic act that refers at once both to the marks we make and the marks made on us through a life time.

This exhibition is supported by the Fritt Ord Foundation, Office for Contemporary Art Norway (OCA) and the Royal Norwegian Embassy in London.

### Note to Editors:

1. Ikon is open Tuesday – Sunday and Bank Holiday Mondays, 11am - 6pm. Admission is free.
2. Ikon Gallery is supported using public funding from Arts Council England and Birmingham City Council.
3. For more information and high-res images please contact Sophie Campos or Emma Gilhooly at Pelham Communications on 020 8969 3959 or email [sophie@pelhamcommunications.com](mailto:sophie@pelhamcommunications.com) or [emma@pelhamcommunications.com](mailto:emma@pelhamcommunications.com)

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[www.ikon-gallery.org](http://www.ikon-gallery.org)  
Ikon Gallery is a registered charity no. 528892

Examples images:



A K Dolven, *When I discovered the end I wanted to live really long*, 2013,  
16mm film still, Courtesy the artist and Ikon



A K Dolven on location © Vegar Moen, Courtesy the artist and Ikon



A K Dolven, *Please Return*, Installed at Ikon, Courtesy the artist and Ikon