

Sandra Vaka – Circulation, 21.mai – 22.juni

For the past fifteen years, Sandra Vaka has created works that, in various ways, shed light on the conditions and expectations of living in a world saturated with products and technology. Her serial works point to desire, consumption, and pleasure—hallmarks of today's consumer society. Her practice blends humor and seriousness in a deliberately dual approach. Sandra explores everyday objects we hold close to the body, such as towels, straws, and computer screens. She investigates these primarily through sculpture, installation, photography, collage, and painting. Vaka works with an almost painterly approach to photography, combining physical water and computer screens, or creating light-based impressions using photograms.

In "Circulation", Sandra Vaka's first exhibition at BGE Contemporary Art, she explores how this seemingly trivial plastic object—the drinking straw—has shifted in symbolism: from representing celebration, euphoria, and innocent childhood, to becoming an icon of overconsumption and man-made environmental destruction. She highlights the straw as a cultural battleground—both banned and defended, mocked and celebrated—using it as an entry point to reflect on contemporary complexities around the body, consumption, and nature. The exhibition presents both new and earlier works in the form of photographs, photograms, and sculptural pieces, all revolving around this object. By elevating the straw through repetition, scaling, and aesthetic manipulation, she reveals the dual nature of the consumer item: at once temporary and constant, excessive and essential.

The works in "Circulation" also invite associations with the body's nutrient absorption, the circular cycles of nature, the modern human's involuntary daily intake of microplastics, the visual overflow of circulating images, material recycling, and the paradox of consumables as both fleeting and eternally present in an endless cycle of use and discard.

In the series Plastic Fantastic, the artist has created photograms—unique photographs made without a camera—where parts of her extensive collection of plastic straws are arranged in bouquets of vibrant color combinations directly on light-sensitive photo paper, then developed. The result is ghost-like traces of the objects, floating in darkness as colorful, repetitive sequences that glow in complementary colors to the original straws. The title Plastic Fantastic points to the material's duality and recalls the futuristic optimism of plastic's revolutionary beginnings—contrasting with the material's current reputation.

In the Suge (Suck) series, Vaka has photographed the openings of straws in close-up, then rephotographed them via a computer screen covered in organic water droplets—a method she has explored in depth since 2008 in numerous photographic projects, becoming something of a trademark. The droplets act as tiny magnifiers, revealing the screen's material structure and vibrant pixelation, while the straws are transformed into dissolved, circular, euphoric surfaces. The screen—today our primary window to the world—becomes both a tool and a motif in Vaka's work. The water poured over the straw openings—but never passing through—can evoke a sense of blocked circulation. These images address not only nourishment, the body, and pleasure, but also the overwhelming and unrestrained flow of information and images we "suck in" through technology.

Sandra Vaka (b. 1980, Stavanger) lives and works in Stavanger after many years as an active artist in Berlin and Copenhagen. She was educated at the Art School in Rogaland, holds a Bachelor's degree from the Institute of Colour at Oslo National Academy of the Arts (KHIO), and a Master's degree from the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen. Sandra Vaka has exhibited widely both nationally and internationally, and her works are included in numerous private and public collections, including Stavanger Art Museum, KORO – Public Art Norway, Danish Arts Foundation, NOCO – Nordic Contemporary Art Collection (Sweden), the art collections of the municipalities of Trondheim, Stavanger, and Sandnes, among others. She is currently working on a public art commission for Teglverket Kindergarten, commissioned by the City of Oslo's Department of Culture, and another for Lervigskvartalet, commissioned by Stavanger Municipality.

