

Catti Brandelius: MISS UNIVERSUM 1997-2005 (2023)

21 September – 5 November 2023

From 1997 to 2005, Catti Brandelius – performing as her alter ego Miss Universum – produced films, pamphlets, poems, fanzines, events and songs with specific feminist content. Index presents an exhibition attending to the multiplicity of Brandelius' character from perspectives in 2023, inviting in a spectrum of voices and opinions from Katarina Bonnevier, Maryam Fanni, Anna Kinbom, Johan Lundin and Andria Nyberg Forshage.

With Miss Universum, Catti Brandelius merged feminist content – and its many layers – with an open and direct way of doing. Giving herself agency by proclaiming herself Miss Universe, Catti Brandelius questioned the preconceptions of the desired feminine body as a commodity, the economic system around beauty and the role of women in society.

Brandelius' Miss Universum has a loud voice and a strong attitude, addresses the question of class and features the suburb of Bredäng (south of Stockholm) in her work. Bredäng is where Miss Universum lives: no judgments about the suburb are made.

From being one of the voices in the band Doktor Kosmos, Miss Universum decided to start her own musical career connecting the fields of pop, punk and indie with contemporary art. If Doktor Kosmos can be understood within the tradition and sphere of Swedish “progressive music”, Miss Universum's sound can be understood as related to the international music arena from the end of the 90s, through her energy, punchy lyrics and a strong presence. Brandelius was touring with her band and, at the same time, working with artistic projects: Miss Universum could do a concert in Moscow and a guided tour at Moderna Museet observing – and criticizing – the collection for its voids and ways of presenting women.

With Miss Universum, Catti Brandelius created a series of works which existed in between the genres of the music video and the artistic film. The same “items” could be shown on musical tv programs or in art institutions. The songs – and the videos – became popular and gained significant media attention. The music videos present a character who is unafraid of looking at the camera, a character that can show a neighborhood, a voice that can comment on historical feminism and on reproductive planning.

The exhibition presents an exhaustive approach to what Miss Universum meant during the end of the 90s and the beginning of the 2000s, creating a documentary setting and a platform

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to observe the work from contemporary perspectives. Archive material, posters, objects, printed matter, media coverage and clothes share space with her films and a series of interviews with cultural practitioners observing Miss Universum today; the exhibition is understood almost as a series of items to be edited in multiple narratives and layers. Films by Catti Brandelius are projected on the walls of Index while the “documentary talking heads” of the invited speakers are placed on monitors at the entrance to the exhibition.

For the opening of the exhibition, Miss Universum (together with Mister Jonköping, Miss Kebab and Mister Dick) gave a concert at Index playing all her songs. The stage and backdrop from the concert remain in place as part of Miss Universum’s exhibition.

Photo, stage backdrop: Åse Bengtsson Helin
Many thanks to Filmform!

Works

Across the universe, Catti Brandelius, 2003
Video, color, sound
3 min 46 sec

Ah det är konsten, Catti Brandelius, 2001
Video, color, sound
3 min 20 sec

Destination Happiness, Catti Brandelius, 2023
Video, color, sound
2 min 52 sec

Ellen Key, Catti Brandelius, 2001
Video, color, sound
4 min 3 sec

En vanlig dag, Catti Brandelius, 1996
Video, color, sound
5 min 24 sec

Fertilize, Catti Brandelius, 2003
Video, color, sound
2 min 47 sec

Public Service, Catti Brandelius, 1999
Video, color, sound
14 min 45 sec

På tunnelbanan, Catti Brandelius, 2001
Video, color, sound
4 min 10 sec

Shopaholic, Catti Brandelius, 2004
Video, color, sound
3 min 21 sec

Streets of Bredäng, Catti Brandelius, 2000
Video, color, sound
3 min 5 sec

Ta det onda med det goda, Catti Brandelius, 2023
Video, color, sound
4 min 1 sec

Archival material including posters, set lists, and notebooks from 1997-2005, banner, dress, tiara, synthesizer keytar, boots.

Films (monitors)

Documentary with Johan Lundin, 2023
2K video, color, sound
14 min

Documentary with Katarina Bonnevier, Maryam Fanni, Anna Kinbom and Andria Nyberg Forshage, Index Foundation, 2023
Camera: Lou Mouw
50 min 56 sec

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