

**The Nordic and Danish Pavilions
Finland, Norway, Sweden and Denmark**

**53rd International Art Exhibition
La Biennale di Venezia**

**The Nordic Committee and the Danish Arts Council
Announce**

THE COLLECTORS

Curated by Elmgreen & Dragset

Professional preview opening: Thursday 4 June at 15:00

Public opening: Sunday 7 June 2009

The exhibition will remain on view through 22 November 2009

Commissioner's Statement:

On the occasion of the 53rd International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia, the Nordic and Danish Pavilions will collaborate with a project curated by artists' duo Elmgreen & Dragset. The project was initiated by the Office for Contemporary Art Norway, the hosting organization for the Nordic Pavilion in 2009, and the Danish Arts Council's Committee for International Visual Arts, commissioners of their respective pavilions, with the intention to create a 'transnational neighbourhood' within the Giardini, an exhibition context traditionally dedicated to national representation. The appointment of Michael Elmgreen and Ingar Dragset as curators was the logical result of this attempt to construct a common space within the Giardini because their joint work as artists has been characterised until today by an exploration of both public and private space, and the uses, scenographies and power relations that are at play within them. The curators have responded to this idea with an exhibition that, under the title 'The Collectors', offers an allegorical stage set where two interrelated fictional portraits are presented, each in connection to one of the two pavilions. Through this setting, the particular and personal of the individuals portrayed is set in contrast to the wider, open landscape of the Venice Biennale, in an exploration of the increasingly porous realms of the private and the public.

Curatorial Statement:

Together with a selection of invited international artists, Elmgreen & Dragset will transform the existing architecture of the Danish and Nordic Pavilions into domestic settings, and invite the audience to be guests in a domestic ambience. Here, dining rooms and bedrooms, furniture, fireplaces, a stained glass skylight and the artworks nestled within the households will reveal the uncanny stories of various fictional inhabitants, their obsessive characters and their diverse lifestyles.

The public will be guided on a tour by a real estate agent through a “For Sale” Danish Pavilion, and will be told the story of the Ingmar Bergman-style family dramas that use to haunt this house. A long swimming pool will lead the visitors to the neighbouring Nordic Pavilion – a flamboyant bachelor’s pad. Inside they will encounter the domestic remnants of the mysterious Mr. B, and be met by a group of young male hustlers sipping vodka tonics in an environment that could be a case study motif taken from a David Hockney painting.

As the title of the show indicates, the curators will approach the topic of collecting, and the psychology behind the practice of expressing oneself through physical objects. Why do we gather items and surround ourselves with them in our everyday lives? Which mechanisms of desire trigger our selection? The selected artworks, alongside the interior design, kitchenware, clothing and even a collection of flies, will compose the complex narratives of this double exhibition. Through the house décor and the collection of artworks, the garments in the wardrobes, the porcelain in the kitchen and the books in the library, the identities of the fictional inhabitants, their passions and melancholy, will emerge piece by piece.

‘The Collectors’ is not a group show in the conventional sense. The pavilions will undergo a radical reconstruction, and more than twenty artists and designers of all ages, ranging from established to emerging ones, will contribute to creating a different kind of exhibition format, one that will appear closer to a film set than a conventional art display. The curators aim to establish a unique atmosphere of intimacy with their staged exhibition – one that can run counter to the official spectacle and formal nature of the Biennale – and, in close collaboration with the participating artists and designers, they hope to circumvent all the usual competitive aspects of the larger art event.

The Artists:

The artists and designers included in the exhibition are: **Thora Dolven Balke, Massimo Bartolini, Hernan Bas, Guillaume Bijl, Maurizio Cattelan, Elmgreen & Dragset, Pepe Espaliú, Tom of Finland, Simon Fujiwara, Han & Him, Laura Horelli, Martin Jacobson, William E. Jones, Terence Koh, Jani Leinonen, Klara Lidén, Jonathan Monk, Nico Muhly, Norway Says, Henrik Olesen, Nina Saunders, Vibeke Slyngstad, Sturtevant and Wolfgang Tillmans.**

The Publication:

The exhibition will be accompanied by a publication and a guidebook to the pavilions. The publication will consist of a printed canvas bag containing collectibles selected by the participating artists and invited writers, and will extend the theme of collecting into fields beyond those approached in the exhibition.

The Organizers:

Elmgreen & Dragset have been appointed curators by the commissioners of the Danish and Nordic Pavilions. The Danish Arts Council's Committee for International Visual Art is composed of five members, and is chaired by Christine Buhl Andersen. The Nordic Committee consists of representatives of the organizations responsible for the Nordic Pavilion, Marta Kuzma (Director, Office for Contemporary Art Norway, Oslo, Norway), Ann-Sofi Noring (Deputy Director and Chief Curator, Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden), and Marketta Seppälä (Director, FRAME, Helsinki, Finland). Marta Kuzma is also the Commissioner of the Nordic Pavilion in 2009. The cooperation between the Danish Pavilion and the Nordic Pavilion for the 53rd International Art Exhibition is coordinated as a joint venture between the Office for Contemporary Art Norway and the Danish Arts Council.

The Curators:

Michael Elmgreen and Ingar Dragset have been collaborating as an artists' duo since 1995, and have exhibited in art institutions around the world, including Tate Modern and the Serpentine Gallery in London, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, the Museum für Moderne Kunst in Frankfurt am Main, and the Palais de Tokyo and the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, both in Paris.

The Opening:

A professional preview opening of 'The Collectors' at the Nordic and Danish Pavilions will take place at 15:00 on Thursday, 4 June 2009. 'The Collectors' will open to the public on Sunday, 7 June 2009 at the Giardini, Venice as part of the 53rd Venice Biennale, and remain on view through 22 November 2009.

Press Accreditation Information:

Accreditation for the press preview of the 53rd International Art Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia must be requested directly to the Biennale Press Office. Please go to: <http://www.labiennale.org/en/press/art/accreditation/>

Please note that applications for press accreditations have to be submitted by April 30 2009.

For National Press:

Denmark: Lene Lund Hansen, The Danish Arts Council, lenlun@kunst.dk

Norway: Marthe Tveitan, Office for Contemporary Art Norway, marthe@oca.no

Sweden: Maria Morberg, Moderna Museet, M.Morberg@modernamuseet.se

Finland: Marita Muukkonen, FRAME, Marita.Muukkonen@frame-fund.fi

For International Press:

Brian Phillips, Black Frame New York, bphillips@framenoir.com

For additional information and Norwegian, Finnish, Swedish and Danish press contacts, please check: www.danish-nordic-pavilions.com

The project is funded by the Danish Arts Council, Office for Contemporary Art Norway, Moderna Museet and FRAME Finnish Fund for Art Exchange.



The exhibition has received additional support from the Arts Council Norway. The publication is supported by Fritt Ord – The Freedom of Expression Foundation, Oslo, Norway.

