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Trude Viken Biography

Trude Viken was born in the remote coastal village of Lødingen, Norway in 1969. Located on the eastern tip of Hinnøya island, Lødingen is known as a scenic gateway to the Lofoten archipelago—sparsely populated, shaped by dramatic coastal landscapes, and culturally distinct from Norway’s southern centers of power.

Largely self-taught, Viken was ‘discovered’ by American artist Richard Prince in 2018, an early advocate who introduced her to New York representation and an international discourse. Since the early 1980s, she has maintained a daily painting practice beginning with ‘Diary Notes,’ an ongoing, expansive series of self-portraits probing the emotions beneath social facades. What began as an intimate investigation of interior ‘weather’ evolved into a decades-long inquiry into the unstable nature of identity.

Formerly a nurse’s aide, sutures and wounds reappear in her work—not as symbols, but as residues of lived experience, approaching the body with clinical proximity and care. Flesh is not idealized; it is handled, opened, repaired, and exposed. In this way, her practice enters a discourse on representation and body politics, resisting the smooth optimization and curated identities valued by an increasingly digital world.

Features warp, colors flare, and surfaces remain deliberately unresolved. By refusing resolution and visual polish, Viken resists mediated surfaces, instead insisting on imperfection and the unpredictable rhythms of memory and lived experience. Her works are psychologically charged, materially alive, and quietly resistant to the homogeneity rampant in contemporary image culture.

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For Viken, issues of exposure and identity are not purely psychological but also geographic and social. After leaving the North, she encountered cultural hierarchies that cast Northern Norwegians as loud, excessive, unsophisticated, and unruly, in contrast to the Oslo elite's perceived restraint. Until mid-20th-century labor migration reshaped social dynamics, landlords in Oslo could openly specify 'ingen nordlendinger' ('No Northerners.')

This personal experience of marginalization forms a quiet but persistent undercurrent in her work: a sensitivity to how bodies are read, categorized, and socially positioned.

Across her paintings, drawings and sculpture, the face remains a site of negotiation—between pride and shame, resilience and fracture, visibility and refusal. Viken's figures do not perform coherence; they appear defiant, exhausted, desirous, or undone—fields of emotional negotiation rather than fixed identities. In a world shaped by frictionless images and algorithmic self-presentation, her work insists on material density and emotional candor as forms of quiet opposition. The gesture counters the algorithm; the wound interrupts the spectacle.

Her works affirm the relevance of figuration as a political tool. Viken channels a personal history of marginalization, bodily care, and psychic endurance into a meditation on how identities can be constructed and reclaimed within a hyper-mediated world. The resulting body of work is intimate and structurally aware: deeply autobiographical, yet unmistakably of its political present.

Trude Viken lives and works in Oslo.

Selected solo exhibitions include: 'Trude, Viken': Fortnight Institute, New York; 'Inside Out,' Belenius, Stockholm; 'Midnight Theater,' Fortnight Institute, New York; 'Faces and Traces,' Fortnight Institute, New York; 'Midnight Activities,' Belenius, Stockholm; 'Night Eyes,' curated by Fabiola Alondra and Jane Harmon, Vestfossen Kunstlaboratorium, Norway; 'Twilight Dwellers,' Ricco/Maresca, New York.

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Notable group exhibitions include 'Hunters in the Snow,' 303 Gallery, New York; 'Person(a),' Venus Over Manhattan, New York; 'Strange Figures,' Marvin Gardens, Ridgewood, New York; 'Inside Out,' Kaviar Factory, Lofoten, Norway;

Currently Viken's works are on view at the Kaviar Factory in Lofoten, Norway.