

ANJA NIEMI



**PORTRETT HVIT, 2009**  
FRONT & BACK COVER  
**FIRE HVITE HESTER, 2009**  
INSIDE BACK COVER  
**HVIT HEST BAKFRA, 2009**



ANJA NIEMI



A *Riflemaker* EXHIBITION



A RIFLEMAKER EXHIBITION  
**ANJA NIEMI "PORCELAIN"**  
RIFLEMAKER LONDON: OCTOBER 2009

A series of photographs depicting staged and arranged subjects, beginning with images of two Arabian horses and one black stallion. The white horses are light and silent, yet there is a sense of discomfort with our intrusion. The stallion's solidity is also broken by his bleak posture and his cimmerician body merging into the black background making him seem almost translucent.

Dutch vanitas still life paintings of the seventeenth century symbolised the 'vanity' of human desires, the futility of luxury and wealth, and the evanescence of life. In these meticulously painted, splendidly illusionistic renderings of the good things of life, subtle hints of incipient decay trouble the luscious surfaces.

The horses become art objects of seamless beauty, while we are reminded of their transient nature.







IN THE POOL, STADTBAD  
ODERBERGER BERLIN, 2006















PROFIL SVART, 2009



PELS, 2009





**TO VASKEJELLEREN,  
OSLO, 2007  
PREVIOUS STILLS FROM  
GJEMSEL, 9MIN 35 MM  
FILM, 2008**





## ANJA NIEMI "STADTBAD"

Stadtbad Oderberger was once a beautiful neo-renaissance style bathhouse filled with enthusiastic swimmers during the Roaring Twenties, when Berlin was known as *Metropolis*. Later, the bathhouse provided a sanctuary for the citizens of the city during Nazism, WWII, and the struggle of life under communism. But the communist regime neglected the bathhouse, and in 1986, Stadtbad Oderberger was shut down for good.

'Stadtbad' once again became the story of a disappearing life as Anja Niemi played out her images in the derelict buildings of Berlin. The photographs are composed like short plays, where the artist becomes her own puppet, posing in a deconstructive manner. Niemi uses her own body as an object that could just as easily have been thrown away, but like the buildings, she perseveres.

In one photograph Niemi is piled into an old bathtub, with her dissolving arm draped over the edge. Time has been stopped. We don't know for how long she has lain there, or if her body will deteriorate as time passes. The same could be said for the Stadtbad Oderberger, the building she inhabits. Both possess an element of strength and endurance which prevents them from disappearing completely.





Another photograph, 'The Puppet', was shot in Wallstrasse 85, an extravagant building which housed a girls' dance-school. The academy was shut down because the communist regime did not agree with the dance forms being taught, and the building has been left in a decaying state ever since. The artist places herself in the now empty ballroom, with her limbs on strings, her movements frozen. Niemi is controlled by something, but we are not certain by what or whom.

In 'Free as a Dead Bird', (see inside back cover fold) Niemi's body is split into two, the coffin-like velvet backdrop setting the mood of a dreamlike state. One of the figures lays still as the other rises as if trying to free either herself, or the dead bird she holds in her hand.

The history of the Stadtbad buildings mirror the state of devastation we encounter when we ourselves are not able to rise up after being struck down by the brutality that life can entail. Yet, there is some unknown force which prevents us from surrendering. 'Stadtbad' touches upon our frailty and reluctance to recover from these destructions and the contrasting perseverance that stops us from dissolving completely.

As Berlin began to flourish and found its way back to life, Stadtbad and Wallstrasse 85 still remained, surrounded by the buzz of the new city as if nothing had ever happened. The puppet has much the same feeling as she lies silently, knowing that life is continuing on the other side of the walls although she is left isolated in her own diminishing state.





ANJA NIEMI  
(b. 1976 Oslo)

EXHIBITIONS

- 2009 - Porcelain. Riflemaker, London
- 2008 - Stadtbad. Riflemaker, London
- 2006 - Portrait of the Invisible. Riflemaker, London
- 2005 - Photo-London  
The Royal Academy of Art, London
- 2005 - Portrait of the Invisible. Galleri Ramfjord, Oslo
- 2005 - Silent Auction. Galleri Ramfjord, Oslo
- 2004 - Portrait of the Invisible. Galleri A, Oslo
- 2002 - Fame and Promise. Victoria Miro Gallery, London
- 2002 - 14/14. Century Gallery, London
- 2000 - Metempsychosis: the Bloomsday Project  
The Cave, Brooklyn, New York
- 2000 - Estrogenius 2000: A Celebration of Women's  
Work. Manhatten Theater Source, New York
- 1999 - Collection of Norwegian Artists  
Norwegian Seamans Church, New York

FORMAL STUDIES

- 1996-1997: London College of Printing. London
- 1997-1998: Parsons School of Design. Paris
- 1998-2000: Parsons School of Design. New York









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Jamie Shovlin: Naomi V. Jelish, 2004



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