

COOPER & GORFER

Delirium

Award-winning artists respond to trauma of the global Covid-pandemi



Delirium, 2020

International award-winning photographic duo, Cooper & Gorfer, embark on a new artwork to try and narrate the unfolding story of the Covid-19 pandemic. ‘The pandemic has been a terrifying event in our lives. Some of us losing loved ones and others their livelihood, the drama streams constantly on our media feeds, leaving most of us feeling helpless,’ says Sarah Cooper. ‘I found myself wanting to humanise the story. By getting close it enabled me to face my own fears.’

Based in Sweden, Cooper & Gorfer were invited in and given attention to the country’s outlier approach to the pandemic. Sarah Cooper, raised in Pittsburgh in the US and her creative partner, Nina Gorfer, who grew up in Vienna, Austria, bring a personal perspective to the frontline Covid-19 situation. ‘We have found ourselves both feeling very much part of the Swedish lived experience as the scale of the pandemic unfolded,’ says Nina Gorfer. ‘But also experiencing it through the lens of our cautious outsider status.’

Cooper & Gorfer created Delirium, a luminous artwork indicative of epic Renaissance battle scenes, to celebrate the constant struggle healthcare workers face in the era of Covid-19. In their discussions with nurses and doctors, IVA Delirium (meaning ICU Delirium in Swedish), has been described as a state of limbo some of the patients are condemned to. Entering a hospital alters time. With the same quality of an airport or the set adrift sensation of an ocean-liner, patients have reported a sensation of perpetual passage, traveling without destination or motion. A suspension of time where they are neither asleep nor awake. A place of continuous sound and light, where loved ones and human touch are absent.

‘When we are in our protective gear we appear like monsters to our patients,’ says Emma Ljungberg, Covid-19 ICU nurse at Sahlgrenska University Hospital / Mölndal. ‘Many do not remember their experiences here, their trauma returning in dreams or triggered later when visiting a hospital.’

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Working with the Intensive Care Unit at Sahlgrenska University Hospital / Mölndal in Sweden, the artists' muralled image depicts a team of female nurses, doctors and physiotherapists in full protective gear engaged in an eternal struggle, lifting and carrying imaginary patients.

Cooper & Gorfer join a growing number of creative professionals working to narrate this unprecedented event. 'The rhetoric of war and the polarization of politics is so synonymous with this pandemic,' says Sarah Cooper. 'The Arts have a place in reclaiming this. The vulnerability of both the patients and healthcare workers needs the nuance of the creative approach to best capture it.' continues Nina Gorfer. After speaking with staff at Sahlgrenska University Hospital and other professionals overseas, Cooper & Gorfer heard a constant refrain from the label 'heroes'. 'Our new work, Delirium, aims to reclaim the humanity of these helpers and honour their Sisyphus – like endeavour.' – Cooper & Gorfer

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Cooper & Gorfer are represented by gallery Larsen Warner

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For commercial inquiries please contact Torun Alenius at Skarp Agent

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About Cooper & Gorfer



Envious Bodies & Yellow Roseline, 2020 // Between These Folded Walls, Utopia

Cooper & Gorfer comprises the artists Sarah Cooper (US, 1974) and Nina Gorfer (Austria, 1979). Based on the stories and lives of the women they portray, Cooper & Gorfer explore issues of memory, migration, feminism, dislocation, and the malleability of identity.

The artist duo are known for their distinct hybrid portraits of women. Their photo-based collages are anchored in an anthropological research of people, place and the genius loci. Sarah Cooper and Nina Gorfer reimagine the tradition of portraiture by visually examining and deconstructing the narrative of those they portray. As much audience as creators, their own experiences are intertwined with those of the women they portray, resulting in images in which several epochs are simultaneously represented. Like art history's Mannerists and Surrealists, Cooper & Gorfer strain observable reality through a complex psychological filter of memories, moods and wounds.

Based in Sweden, Cooper & Gorfer have worked closely together since 2006. Their work has been shown at Hasselblad Center, Kulturhuset Stockholm, MAK Frankfurt, The National Museum of Photography Copenhagen, NOMA New Orleans Museum of Art, Nuuk Art Museum in Greenland, and Fotografiska among others. In 2018, Cooper & Gorfer won the prestigious German Photo Book award for their monograph *I Know Not These My Hands*. Cooper & Gorfer are Hasselblad Ambassadors.

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