

Sleepless Nights

The 1980s in the Moderna Museet Collection

28 February 2023–14 January 2024

In the contradictory 1980s, several remarkable women artists emerged in Sweden and the Nordic region. "Sleepless Nights" revolves around them. The name of this exhibition was inspired by Teresa Wennberg's large video installation "Nuit Blanche" (1983), incorporating 25 TV screens, a work that epitomises how artists were exploring new media and materials.

The art market was red-hot, the alternative art scene rebelled, the fear of HIV and AIDS was rampant, and the Cold War was coming to an end. This pivotal point between the politicised 1970s and the artistically terser 1990s left its mark on the Moderna Museet collection.

In the exhibition "Sleepless Nights", the curator Anna Tellgren focuses on Swedish and Nordic women artists who made their breakthrough in the 1980s but have not been shown that often in recent years.

"Attention has been rather fluctuating, and these artists have been a bit overlooked for various reasons. They include Ingrid Orfali, who went to Australia and moved on to other things, and Teresa Wennberg, who has always been at the cutting edge of technology but has worked mainly in France in recent decades."

The exhibition introduces visitors to some 130 works by ground-breaking artists, including Barbro Bäckström, Cecilia Edefalk, Stina Ekman, Tuija Lindström, Eva Löfdahl and Ingrid Orfali. They are accompanied here by male colleagues such as Torsten Andersson and Max Book. International comparisons are made with works by some of the mega-stars of the period, including Daniel Buren, Robert Mapplethorpe, Cindy Sherman and Andy Warhol.

How come so many women artists made their major debut on the scene in the 1980s?

"The Swedish art scene was dominated by men at the time, while women artists searched for and found other strategies, including new technologies, different subjects and motifs. Many of them also taught at art schools, making a deep impression, not least on the next generation of women who engaged in photo-based art in the 1990s."

Events for the public during the exhibition

On the day of the opening, 28 February, Anna Tellgren will give a guided lunch-time tour of the exhibition. On Saturday, 4 March, the artist Stina Ekman comes to Moderna Museet and talks to Anna Tellgren about the 1980s and her work. Further events to be announced. Visit modernamuseet.se

About the new presentation of the Moderna Museet collection

"Sleepless Nights" is the first in a new series of thematic exhibitions of the Moderna Museet collection. These presentations will explore different narratives in art history, replacing the previous chronological format. Together, the new exhibitions will highlight art from the 20th century to today, reflecting the whole range of the Moderna Museet collection.