

## Woman With Child, Strandgade 30

By Henrik Wivel

In her work, *Woman with child, Strandgade 30*, the Danish artist, Lærke Lauta conducts a dialogue with the artist, Vilhelm Hammershøi (1864-1916). Around 1900 he painted a large number of interior pictures, often including his wife, Ida Ilsted, as a model with her back turned. The most poignant of these interiors were painted at Number 30 Strandgade in Copenhagen, where the now world-famous artist lived from 1898 to 1909.

Lærke Lauta's work consists of two videos, screened at the same time. She filmed both videos in Vilhelm Hammershøi's apartment at Number 30 Strandgade. One of the videos shows a woman with her back turned, filmed in the course of a whole day from sunrise to sunset in the apartment's changing spatialities and light. The film is speeded up so that it lasts 20 minutes. The other video shows the same woman, her back still turned, with a child, who is facing the viewer. The woman with the child was filmed in real time.

Lærke Lauta's visual discussion with Vilhelm Hammershøi is at once refined and intricate. As a woman facing one of Danish art history's most famous men, she makes certain statements, which, on one hand, pay tribute to Hammershøi for his aesthetic compositions and ability to capture the spiritual aspects of light and space; on the other hand, humanising and feminising the artist's vision.

There is a barren desire and a certain (cf. Sigmund Freud) alien feeling at work in Hammershøi's interior pictures. The marriage of Vilhelm Hammershøi and Ida Ilsted was childless. As a kind of result of this, his wife Ida Ilsted was transformed into a lonely object in his pictures, even in some places to a prop, which he moved around at his pleasure to suit the subject.

But Lærke Lauta's videos transform the woman into a living, breathing creature of flesh and blood, who is very much present in the room. And she is not alone; she carries a child in her arms. So Lærke Lauta's female portraits from Number 30 Strandgade move from barrenness to fertility. The interiors with the woman are no longer lifeless and statuesque, but mobile, full of life and humanised. The viewer comes face to face with the child and is thus recognised and explained, while the artist's vision is freed from guilt.

*Woman With Child, Strandgade 30* is a conscious, immensely aesthetic dialogue with, and radically changed, feminist perspective of Vilhelm Hammershøi.