

Willing



Abbe

ASPM

**WILLING
&
ABLE**
by Maria Hardin

“We’re all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars.”

— Oscar Wilde via *Mollrats* (1995)

Pamela Anderson’s barbed wire tattoo, troll dolls with cute rhinestone belly buttons, John Bauer storybooks, Hot Topic, Scandinavian mid-century design, early-American Shaker furniture, David Cronenberg films, tan skin, vajazzling, and rural Swedish farmhouses—walking into “Willing & Able” is kind of like encountering corecore (a TikTok genre) in real life. I am woozy with feelings. The amalgamation of aesthetic references evoking an internet-inflected sadness that comes from “infinity-awareness and finity-awareness” (‘I LOVE CORECORE’ by ANGELICISM01).

Each piece vibrates with anemoia. Anemoia, according to *The Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows*, is nostalgia for a time you’ve never known. The show leaves me sick with longing for a time before the internet existed, but this isn’t a show about the internet.

“Willing & Able” is the private language of an artist made tangible. Sessa Englund’s vocabulary materializing as carved wood, crystal diamanté, belly rings, and latex—their repetitious use and re-use forming visual sentences where bimbo meets masculine. The syntax is austere and sexy.



Sessa Englund, *Untitled (Crust Series)*, 2024.
Alder wood, 130 x 79 cm.

The specificity of material choices adds layers of intimacy. North American mahogany and Swedish alder hint at Englund's bi-cultural identity. While a more generic iconography of Y2K teendom invites the viewer into a distorted collective memory.

Time echoes between past and future selves, imprinting visually on the latex skin rugs. Without the intervention of preservation techniques these futuristic träsmattor will decay. For latex, like skin, requires care.

Hanging wooden crests draw on the 19th-century tradition of snickarglädje (carpenter's delight), a form of decorative wood carving as self-expression that fell out of vogue in the modernist era that worshipped functionalism above all else. The crests are adorned with body modification, another type of self-expression intended to highlight individuality. Rather than individuate, both traditions interlink their users in a web of shared signifiers.

The artist's hypersensitivity to pop culture effortlessly mixes lowbrow, highbrow, niche, and mainstream. The synthesis of motifs exploring and questioning the cultural romanticization of the ways in which objects hold meaning.

Gaston Bachelard, in the *Poetics of Reverie*, said that "we cannot say what reality is, only what it seems like to us." Is Englund saying that reality is interconnected and transitory? There is an earnest



Sessa Englund, *Untitled #1, #2 (Crust Series)*, 2024.
Alder wood, #1: 117 x 70 cm, #2: 113 x 71 cm.

vulnerability in the idea of being ready, “willing and able.” It’s the sincerity of mall goths that teens so easily achieve and adults so easily forget. Back, towards this mode of being is where Englund seems to be leading us.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Maria Hardin a Swedish-American artist and bilingual poet based in Stockholm. She holds an MFA from HDK-Valand (2023). Her debut poetry collection, *Cute Girls Watch When I Eat Aether*, was recently published by Action Books. Hardin’s work has been exhibited across Scandinavia, and her writing has appeared in *American Chordata*, *Burning House Press*, *Denver Quarterly*, *Fanzine*, *Gutter*, *LIGEIA Magazine*, *Ordkonst*, *Populär Poesi*, *SLFFCK*, *Spam Zine*, *Spectra Poetry*, *Tidskriften Provins*, *Wigleaf*, and elsewhere. She can be found at mariaology.com



Sessa Englund, *Willing & Able*, 2024.
Exhibition detail.



Sessa Englund, *Untitled (Crust Series)*, 2024.
Alder wood, 24 x 26 cm.



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