

# Trap Line

**Scott Rogers**

At the start of this year I took part in a residency at the Nordisk Kunstnarsenter Dale in Norway. NKD is located alongside the Sunnfjord in the west of the country, about 4 hours north of Bergen by car. While on the residency I set up and monitored a series of feeders adapted from discarded Perspex display structures. These displays were previously used in commercial / museum settings, where they were intended to contain, to support, and to disappear. Besides carrying suet or seeds, my feeders intermittently functioned as camera stations. With a GoPro I recorded videos of the visiting birds.

Winter in this part of Norway offers limited prospects for viewing wildlife. In fact, there are few creatures present at all. Most animals I did see eked out existences along the coastline or in the relative shelter of the small municipality. My conjecture is that this lack of animal life was due to a harsh climate coupled with limited food supply. The landscape looks picturesque, but many of the forests are monoculture conifer plantations, developed after the advent of industrial logging. As habitat, plantations offer little. The trees are extractable resources cloaked in the appearance of woodlands—silent amusement parks up until maturity of the asset.

Consequently, my feeders supported a narrow range of creatures: the ones that have adapted to exploit human charity. Blue Tit, Great Tit, Coal Tit, and Magpies were the sum total species that I witnessed eating from the feeders. Other birds were sometimes nearby. A Tawny Owl would approach at night, possibly because the spilled seeds attracted rodents. I saw various songbirds, but many of these maintained their instinctual distrust of the human gift. The White-backed Woodpecker is one example. I attempted to lure an individual of this species to feeders on its favoured trees but it disappeared as soon as the object entered its territory. I was sincerely concerned that I had frightened it, though when I was gone the peanuts in its feeder also disappeared! A tiny Goldcrest—found dead after the harshest weeks of winter—was testament to the thin margins for those unconditioned to artificial food supplies.

After I returned to Scotland in mid-March I began to review footage from the camera stations. I extracted numerous stills from the video files, ultimately selecting a single image as reference for a painting. I don't often paint now, but when I was a teenager I took extra-curricular classes with a wildlife artist named David Kitler. As part of the class I learned

mimetic techniques for drawing and painting from photographs. I've employed what I could remember of these techniques for the painted image included in *Trap Line*.

I admit I feel ambivalent about painting this way. Essentially, these painting processes are a systematic set of actions that lead to a deceptive result. The painting signifies virtuosity, but it is more-or-less the execution of a programme, through various specialist implements, entwined with human error. However, one unexpected result is that these methods also bootstrap the emergence of a hidden outcome: they attune detailed attention to the image and the subject it frames. I started to feel some unpredicted optimism from this hunting without killing.

Scott Rogers (b. Calgary, CA, 1981) lives in Glasgow. Recent exhibitions including his work have taken place at Aldea (Bergen, NO), Edinburgh Sculpture Workshop (UK), Oracle (Berlin, DE), and Franz Kaka (Toronto, ON). He will participate in the Kamias Triennial (Manila, PH) in 2020.

#### Exhibition Checklist

##### *Codec*

2019

Acrylic and gesso on hardboard, Velcro  
49cm x 27.5cm

##### *Mutuality*

2019

Perspex displays, disused security camera mounts, screws (security, deck, panhead), plastic nuts, GoPro components, Velcro, string, coconut husk containing suet, cable ties, birch branches, ratchet straps

Left to right: 21.7cm x 60cm x 21.2cm  
16.2cm x 16.6cm x 12.2cm  
21.5cm x 21.2cm x 12.2cm  
20cm x 25cm x 10.7cm  
57cm x 37.5 cm x 11cm



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