

RUNO LAGOMARSINO

VIOLENCE IS HARDER THAN A STONE

Opening: January 15, 2026, 16.00 – 19.00 pm

Exhibition period: January 16 – February 28, 2026

Opening hours: Tuesday – Friday 11.00 – 18.00, Saturday 12.00 – 16.00

Carl Milles' Aviator Monument, installed at Karlaplan in 1931, is a short two-minute walk from Galerie Nordenhake. Large slabs of diabase form both an impressive plinth for the bronze sculpture of an eagle, its broad wings outstretched, and the stolid frame for a series of bas-relief sculptures in white marble. One of these depicts the famous "Eagle" hydrogen balloon that polar researcher Salomon August Andrée and two others used to fly to their untimely death on the arctic island of Vitön near Svalbard in 1897. The balloon, in Milles' sculpture, is still cheerfully aloft and accompanied by an orderly fleet of war planes from the First World War.

Another marble stele depicts Icarus, the tragic hero of Greek mythology who disregarded his father's advice and flew too close to the sun, which melted his wings and sent him plummeting to his death in the Aegean Sea. Milles' monument shows Icarus before he fulfills his mythological role, while he is still flying triumphantly. Commissioned by the Swedish Aeronautical Society, the work honors pioneers in aviation—Andrée's remains had been discovered in 1930, just a year before the sculpture's inauguration—but it subsequently has become infamous as a rallying point for the supporters of National Socialism and neo-Nazis.

This history and Milles' reputation as a Nazi sympathizer are well-known, but I rehearse them here to tease out forms of embodied defiance in Runo Lagomarsino's exhibition *Violence is Harder than a Stone*. Lagomarsino made frottages from Milles' sculpture, lifting Icarus' arrogant flight out of the stone and installing the different versions of his hand-made copy across Galerie Nordenhake's walls. The effect is to reverse the narrative: suddenly, it is Icarus's fall that is foregrounded. If the purpose of Milles' sculpture is to capture and immobilize dynamic movement, to monumentalize flight and tie it inextricably to the triumph of nationalism, Lagomarsino repeats its motifs with difference. His charcoal rubbings restore a measure of contingency to the monument's story, resisting its closure of history.

It is no simple thing to undermine the stability of the semiotic order that fascism deploys. In deferring to the performative gesture, the artist refuses to reproduce the monument's violence, to unmake it or indulge in fantasies of destruction. Instead, he stages another formal (embodied) language, a way of speaking back that leverages the stability of the gallery space without ceding to it entirely. Lagomarsino's investment in the performative is sensible even in his treatment of materials that appear inexorably stable. The massive granite base of the lamp post that stood sentry at the entrance of Malmö's former central police station, for example, which was discarded when the building was converted into luxury condominiums. Lagomarsino acquired it and had it sliced into individual panels, transmuting the authority of the block into something transitional, like cladding. The slabs leaning against the gallery walls might be beautiful minimalist objects, perfect in their irreducible materiality, but they are also a prompt for this question: what force is necessary to transform the infrastructure of the State?

This question, in turn, opens onto the problem of the body, its gestures, its fundamental contingency. An appropriated tabletop from another Malmö police station, this one dedicated to people seeking State identification and passports, is covered with the graffiti of countless people filing out forms and waiting. What force is necessary for the State to build borders, demand authentication of belonging from its residents, construct police stations and other offices in which many thousands of people spend many hundreds of thousands of hours for their turn to prove legitimacy? What gestures of resistance are possible within that kind of edifice, which is invested with the physical time of so many? The stone, sliced open so that it covers the base of Galerie Nordenhake's walls, could be read as a futile attempt to destabilize the State's structural violence, perhaps to the same degree that defacing its office furniture while waiting for your papers is futile. Yet these works nevertheless respond to both the State's stone and its violence with the language available to the gesturing hand.

— Natasha Marie Llorens

Runo Lagomarsino was born in Lund, Sweden in 1977, he lives and works in Malmö.

Prominent solo exhibitions include Marabouparken, Stockholm (2024); Lunds konsthall (2021); Moderna Museet, Stockholm (2019); Dallas Museum of Art (2018); LaCriée centre d'Art contemporaine, Rennes and Malmö Konsthall (with Carla Zaccagnini) (both 2015). In 2019 he was awarded the Friends of Moderna Museet Sculpture Prize, and was DAAD artist-in-residence in Berlin.

In 2024 Lagomarsino curated the retrospective exhibition 'Lenke Rothman – Life as Cloth', together with Rebecka Katz Thor, and Mats Stjernstedt, at Malmö Konsthall, Sweden. He has taken part in group exhibitions at Kiasma, Helsinki (2024); CRAC Alsace, Altkirch (2022); ARKEN Museum for Moderne Kunst, Copenhagen (2021); daadgalerie, Berlin (2019); LACMA, Los Angeles; Fondazione Trussardi, Milan; Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago (all 2017); The South London Gallery (2016); Guggenheim Museum, New York and Museo Reina Sofia, Madrid (both 2014).

Lagomarsino's work is constantly featured in global biennials: Gwangju Biennial (2024 and 2008), Venice Biennial (2015 and 2011), Gothenburg Biennial (2021 and 2015), Ural Biennial (2021), Prospect New Orleans (2017), São Paulo Art Biennial (2012), the Istanbul Biennial (2011); and the Guangzhou Triennial (2008).

Lagomarsino develops works that present a critical vision on the construction of history-based connection, themes or analysis in current geopolitics. His work presents a well-defined political position; they possess an unfinished and fragmented aspect and acts as provocative reflections on themes of territory and exclusion. His family tree spans the globe, born in Scandinavia to Argentinian parents descended from Italian 'émigrés' who fled Europe during the First World War. His work effortlessly shifts between installation, collage, drawing, performance, and video, but always keeps in line with his heritage and political vision, charting colonial histories and opposing modes of oppression.

Natasha Marie Llorens is a Franco-American arts writer and independent curator based in Stockholm, where she is Professor of Art Theory at the Royal Institute of Art and co-director of the Center for Art and the Political Imaginary.