

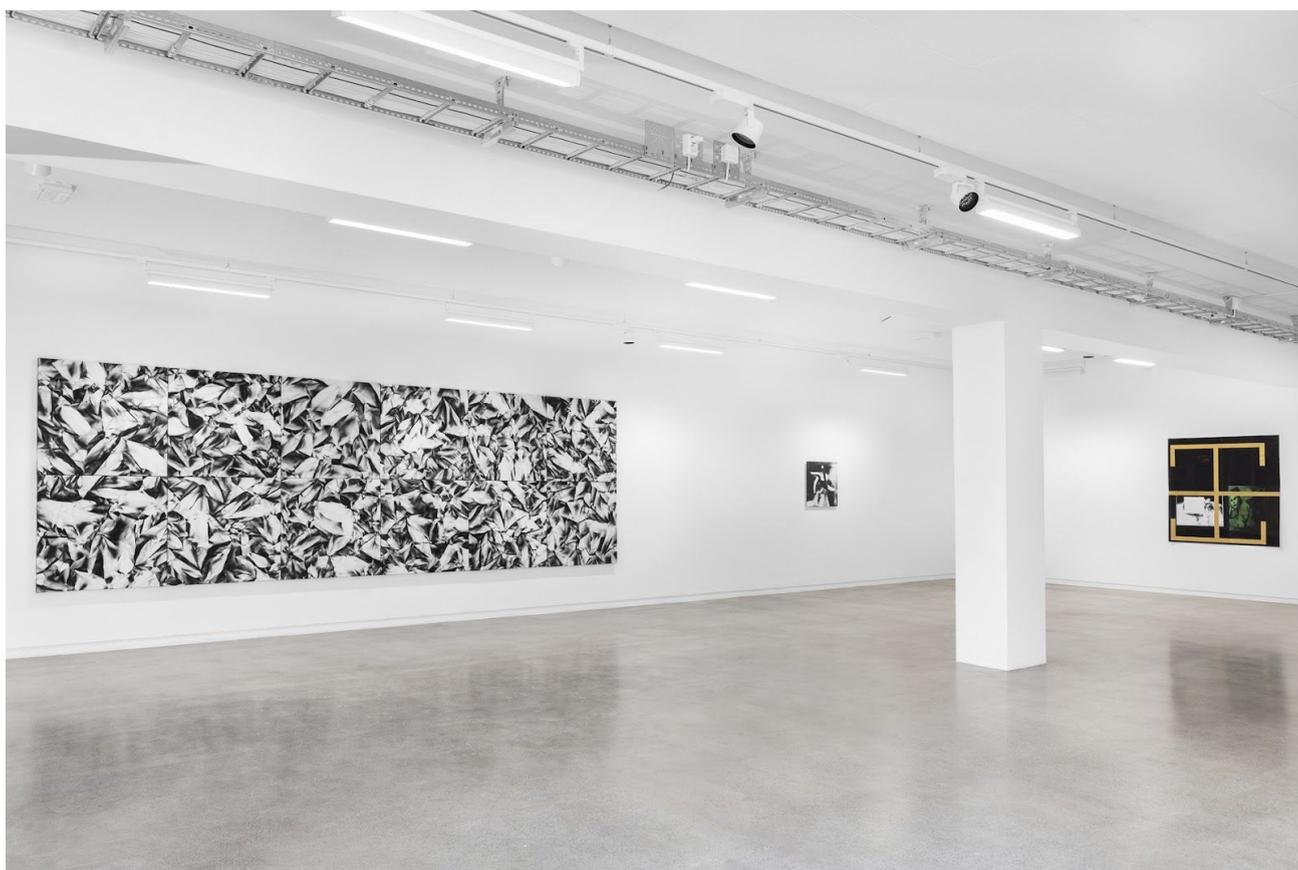
# Aftenposten

## Review: «The Banned Exhibition» cultivates death, destruction and discomfort. It is both successful and surprisingly available.

«Nazi art» too unpalatable for New York is exhibited in Oslo.

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Boyd Rice's greatest work brings more associations to the trash in the office than to Nazism and Satanism, but facilitates Darja Bajagić's more direct art.

In 2018, New York's Greenspon gallery was to exhibit work by the duo Darja Bajagić and Boyd Rice. The show never opened. After a storm of what the gallerist, according to *Artnews*, [described as both threats and criticism](#), Amy Greenspon decided to cancel the exhibition, prompting widespread debate and coverage in several [major art journals](#).

The reason was that one of the two, Boyd Rice—artist, noise musician, Satanist and notorious provocateur—has, among other things, made misogynistic comments in the past.

## Facts: Art Exhibition: The Banned Exhibition

And worse: he is known to have figured with prominent American white power leaders on several occasions during the 1980s.

Despite this, Boyd has rejected all accusations of being a Nazi. In a 2012 interview with FACT magazine, he claimed to [bear no political convictions](#), and that he only posed for the photoshoot with Bob Heick, leader of the American Front because he was promised free beer.

This didn't convince his critics. The New York exhibit was canceled, and generated a complex debate regarding the expectation for art to be morally compliant, in relation to the brewing phenomenon of cancel culture

Now, the exhibition is on view in Oslo—behind a heavy black door in a backyard just off Alexander Kielland's Plass at Galleri Golsa. The exhibition has been titled *The Banned Exhibition*.



Darja Bajagić's «Graveyard of Happiness (after Simone Martini's 1317 The Altar of Saint Louis of Toulouse)» (2020)

## Collages and violent stitches



Darja Bajagić's «Graveyard of Happiness (after Simone Martini's 1317 The Altar of Saint Louis of Toulouse)» (2020)

Despite the press release's emphasis on Boyd's role in the show, it is Darja Bajagić's works that steal the attention inside the gallery. The young artist from Montenegro is buzzing with references to Nazism, occultism, melancholy, religious iconography, internet pornography, and violence.

Nor is she completely uncontroversial. In the past, she has collaborated with a convicted American Neo-Nazi who is imprisoned, among other things, for killing a pedophile priest.

This is not art that tries to inspire or please.

All of Bajagić's works are collages. Various motives and materials are glued and sewn together with violent stitches. The stitches are methodical, almost reckless. They are more reminiscent of surgical stitches than textile seams. has been titled *The Banned Exhibition*. But it is also beautiful as the stitches repeat themselves again and again.

However, the collages are not insistent. They are perceived as open to interpretations, even though she invites the viewer through clear references.



Darja Bajagić «Uninterrupted Unreality: A Betrayal of Nothingness» (2020)

## **Is it really okay to be here?**

With Boyd, it's quite the opposite. His most striking works are reminiscent of close-ups of crumpled paper. There is nothing explicitly political about them. Perhaps it is true that he has no political convictions? His art nourishes the doubt.

The fact that Boyd did not exhibit in New York had more to do with the question of who within the art scene deserves a platform based on reputational standards, rather than a judgement of the content to be shown or presented.

It violates a basic principle of letting art and arguments speak for themselves. At the same time, there is a difference between art that creates discomfort when exhibited and art that is not allowed to be exhibited.

This is the problem that has been carried over from the show's previous iteration, and exists at the heart of the show at Galleri Golsa.

It is, formally, almost entirely black and white, though there are great contrasts in expression among the works on view. One can feel a sense of ambivalence as a viewer. Is it really okay to be here? Is it ok to give in to artists who, apart from allegations of neo-Nazism, fetishize violence and hatred?

The answers are not provided, the questions themselves seem to be a necessary part of the exhibition.



Darja Bajagić's «Untitled Study (Cross of Restraint; Weapon from Picture 52)» (2019)

## **The hatred that permeates society**

One thing that is certain, however, is that things are not always how they seem. References that appear throughout a selection of Bajagić's work in *The Banned Exhibition* include police evidence from a trial against the National Socialist Underground (NSU). Between 2000 and 2007, the German neo-Nazi group murdered ten immigrants. These are the best works in the show.

Expressions which lay at the intersection of what is real and what is staged seem to resonate with how we understand the world today through mass media. They provoke thoughts that linger. Bajagić's "Untitled Study (Picture 6: Jacket of the injured with considerable damage to the arm)" (2019) is a prime example of this.

For a long time, the NSU killings were pinned on the Turkish mafia, but it was not until 2011 that information concerning who was really involved had been learned. How could this have gone on for so long before the authorities made any significant progress? [The trial revealed](#) a possible connection with the German police, which led to a national scandal.

This is precisely the arena in which *The Banned Exhibition* is situated. It does not bother voicing yet another opinion aligned with the tired debate linked to the scenario the images in certain works point to, but reminds us that darkness permeates a large portion of our society. It's just that we don't always see it. At Golsa we do.