

PEDER LUND

DENNIS OPPENHEIM - BROKEN RECORD BLUES

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p. 3 Øivind Storm Bjerke, "Ubrytelig tristhet," *Klassekampen*, February 7, 2018

## Unbreakable Sadness

“Broken Record Blues”

Dennis Oppenheim

Peder Lund

Runs until March 17



**HEAD IN THE SAND:** “Broken Record Blues” (1976), which is being shown at Peder Lund, is among Dennis Oppenheim’s best known pieces.

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### REVIEW

*This January one of his sculptures was completely obliterated in South Korea. But at Peder Lund, Dennis Oppenheim’s art has as yet been left unscathed.*

The American conceptualist Dennis Oppenheim, who passed away in 2011, is currently being featured at the Peder Lund gallery in Oslo with his work *Broken Record Blues* from 1976.

*Broken Record Blues* belongs to the early phase of Oppenheim’s career. In a room, a doll sits facing into a corner. At our feet, in a straight line from the doll, another doll lies on the floor. The two dolls are dressed identically and look like two bald men in dark suits. The floor between them is covered in dark-blue sand. Rectilinear stripes in the sand between the two dolls suggest a connection between the pair. Circles of light are projected on to the sand and the stripes.

Because of the artwork’s title, the lines that have been scraped forth in the sand may bring to mind the grooves of a vinyl record, while the blue tinge evokes a sense of melancholy.

In the work’s original installation in 1976 the lines were curved, thus making the imagery evoke even more strongly a fragment of a record. A soundtrack taken from a broken record is repeatedly played on a loop. The work is perceived as a symbol of something that closes in on itself. An unbreakable sadness.

**Oppenheim** was one of the pioneers of land art, conceptualism, body art, and performance art. He gradually also began working on casts and turning up as a surrogate performer in his works.

The piece currently on display at Peder Lund is among his most well known, and it highlights the close connection between early performance art and a dramatist like Samuel Beckett. Simple, ritual actions, repetitions, a nondescript and often absurd setting, and snippets of reality that viewers must tie together to form their own idea of what’s going on—these are all elements we recognize from Beckett’s later, short plays. The grounding in early postwar existentialism and phenomenology, added with a dash of the Theater of the Absurd, reverberates like an echo chamber throughout the early phase of conceptual art and body art.

Like other artists of his generation, Oppenheim would later develop a penchant for making major interventions in public spaces, somewhere at the intersection between architecture, stagecraft, and sculpture.

**Oppenheim** has created international headlines in recent weeks following the willed destruction of one of his final sculptures, which had been installed on a beach in Busan, South Korea. The work in question was a sculptural, flower-like form, made from plastic and steel, that sprang forth from the sandy beach. People considered the work to be so hideous that the local authorities decided to have the work demolished.

Public art clearly has the ability to engage and provoke no matter where in the world it is planted.

Øivind Storm Bjerke  
kunst@klassekampen.no