

Britta Bergersen

The in-game photographer

Interviewed by Eirik Fatland

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DOCUMENTATION

ART





- Britta, her bike, and her suitcase of equipment at 1942 - *someone to trust?*

Britta Bergersen has been a fixture of the Norwegian larp scene since the early 90s, the first and one of the most active “in-game photographers” at Norwegian larps. We are grateful to feature several of her pictures from past larps, many of which have not been published before, as illustrations in this book.

Rather than just bringing a camera to larps, Bergersen prefers to incorporate her presence and equipment as full parts of the game. This is difficult to do at larps set in pre-industrial societies, requiring hidden cameras, making the act of taking photos a purely off-game matter. But larps set in the present or recent history provide plenty of excuses for a character to carry and use a camera.

At the larp *1942 – someone to trust*, Bergersen played a visiting portrait photographer who was hired by the community of a Norwegian west coast hamlet to take confirmation and family portraits. At *Once Upon a Time*, set a half-century earlier at the American frontier, she played a portrait photographer with her own studio. It proved so popular that there was a queue forming outside every morning of the game. “Playing

a photographer is usually more work than play”, she observes, “but the real reward comes afterwards, when developing and looking through the photos.”

A photographer in real life as well, she runs a private studio alongside a museum job preserving vintage and contemporary photos. Her larp photography unites her professional and private lives, letting her explore her interest in vintage photographs by recreating the conditions of their taking. For the character of photographer at a historical larp, she brings along period equipment – cameras, dark room equipment and backdrops – and also researches typical poses, situations, and aesthetics of the era. When in-character at *P13*, a hostage drama larp set to North Dakota in the 1970’s, Bergersen brought along a period Instamatic™ camera. She proceeded to document the game in a way familiar to most of us - drawing on her extensive research on family photography, she imitated the aesthetics of 1970’s family pictures.

Most Norwegian larps are documented only through pictures of players after the larp. Bergersen, too, has a collection of such memorabilia but prefers to take pictures while the players are in-character: “You can see it on their posture and facial expression. The in-character photos look authentic, like pictures of historical people. Afterwards, no matter how much they try, they still look like larpers.”



■ Fishermen at 1942 - *someone to trust?*



■ A scene from the futuristic larp *Ultrapolis*



■ A scene from the futuristic larp *Ultrapolis*



- A corridor at *Europa*, a larp about Nordic refugees seeking asylum in a central European country.



- An asylum seeker in front of the reception centre at *Europa*.



■ Kitchen staff at *Europa*. Bergersen also played a cook, and this photo was taken in-character.



- An asylum seeker at *Europa*.



- Two proletarians arm-wrestling at *Kybergenesis*, where Bergersens character was employed to take propaganda photos. The photo was developed in game.



- Photo of an in-character policeman at *Kybergenesis*. The picture was developed at the larp location, and damaged due to light being let into the darkroom.



■ Players at a cyberpunk genre larp, held in the library of a Norwegian boarding school.

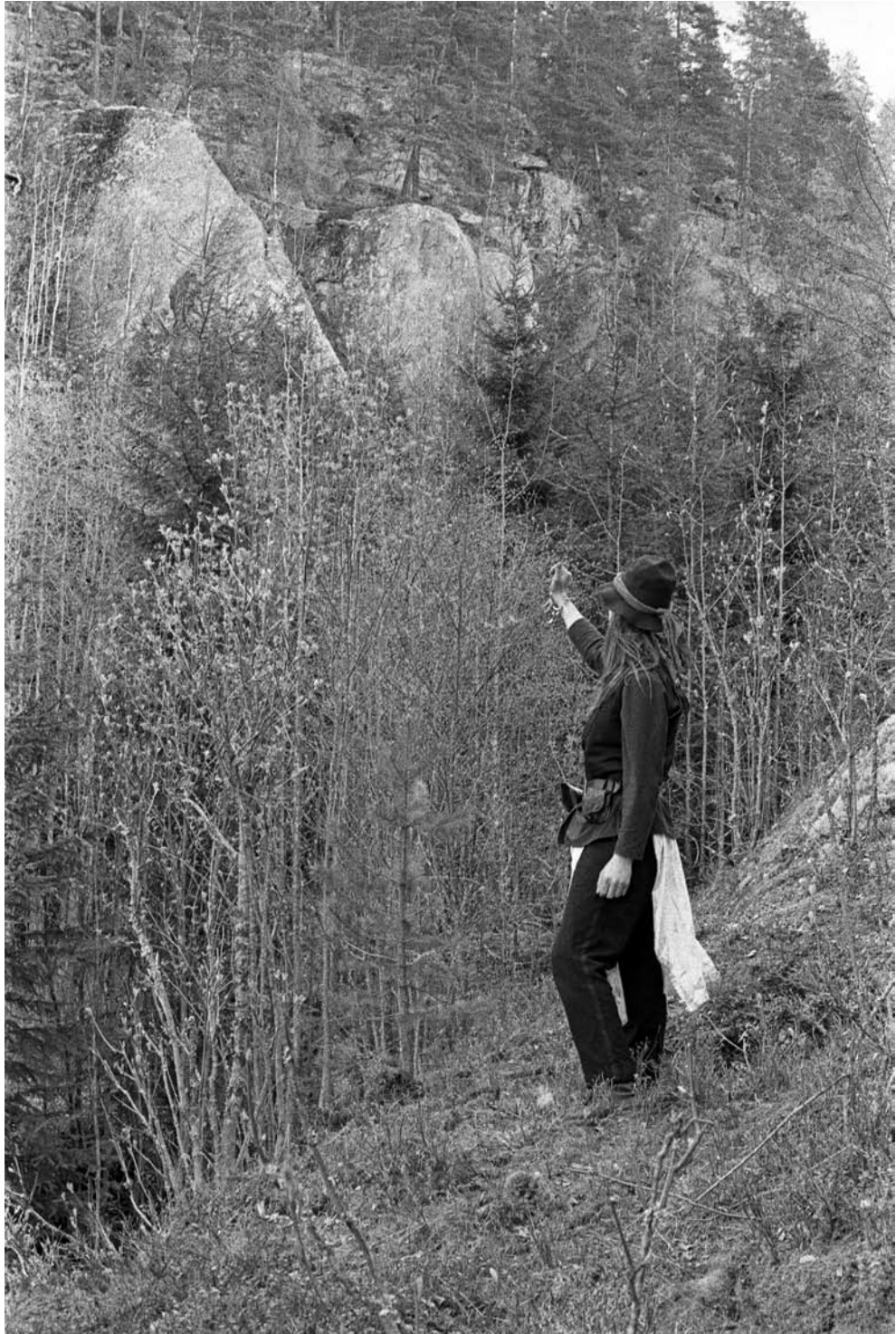


- In-character photography from *Once Upon a Time* – set at the American frontier in the late 19th century.





- Characters at the larp “P13”, shot in conscious imitation of 1970’s consumer photography.



- A scene from *Wanted*, an earlier frontier larp: an Apache invoking ancestral spirits by the sacred mountain.



■ Black Crow,
an Apache, at
Wanted.



- A hulder, a mythical creature, portrayed by a player at a Norwegian fantasy larp.



- Tree and lake, the iconic backdrop to Norwegian fantasy larps.