



Photographer Taps Into "True Norwegian Black Metal" With Book, Gallery Show

BY CHRIS STEFFEN May 13, 2008

Black metal is simultaneously the scourge of Norway and one of its most renowned cultural exports. What started off as a misanthropic musical statement sank into murder and arson in the early to mid-'90s, and the stigma remains, even as the music has moved beyond its origins. Off and on for seven years, American photographer Peter Beste received access to this traditionally closed-off scene, resulting in the book *True Norwegian Black Metal*, and an exhibit of the same name, which opened Friday at New York's Steven Kasher Gallery.

While the violence died out over a decade ago, the scene remains as serious as ever to its participants. To outsiders, it's either merely cartoonish or extremely upsetting. For example, nestled among the pictures of grown men with painted faces breathing fire in caves is a shot of a man named Roger Rasmussen (who goes by the name "Nattefrost" in a band called Carpathian Forest) smoking heroin off of a sheet of foil. Beste recalls what happened next rather vividly. "Then five minutes later, he went in the bathroom and shit on a newspaper and spread it all over his chest and neck and wanted me to photograph him covered in his own shit. He approached me saying he had an idea for the most necro, grim photoshoot ever. I knew what I was getting into — I figured the end result would be worth the stink, and it was." Despite the notoriety of Norwegian black metal for its malevolent nature, Beste felt far more nervous about another scene he was simultaneously documenting: the rap culture of Houston. "That is twenty times more scary and serious than black metal. Not to discount black metal, but they're not like some of these guys in the hood who have nothing to lose, and I've been in plenty of scary situations there."

STEVEN
KASHER
GALLERY

"True Norwegian Black Metal" is showing at the Steven Kasher Gallery through June 7, and Beste's book will be out later this summer.