

# Benedikte Bjerre

*Vault*

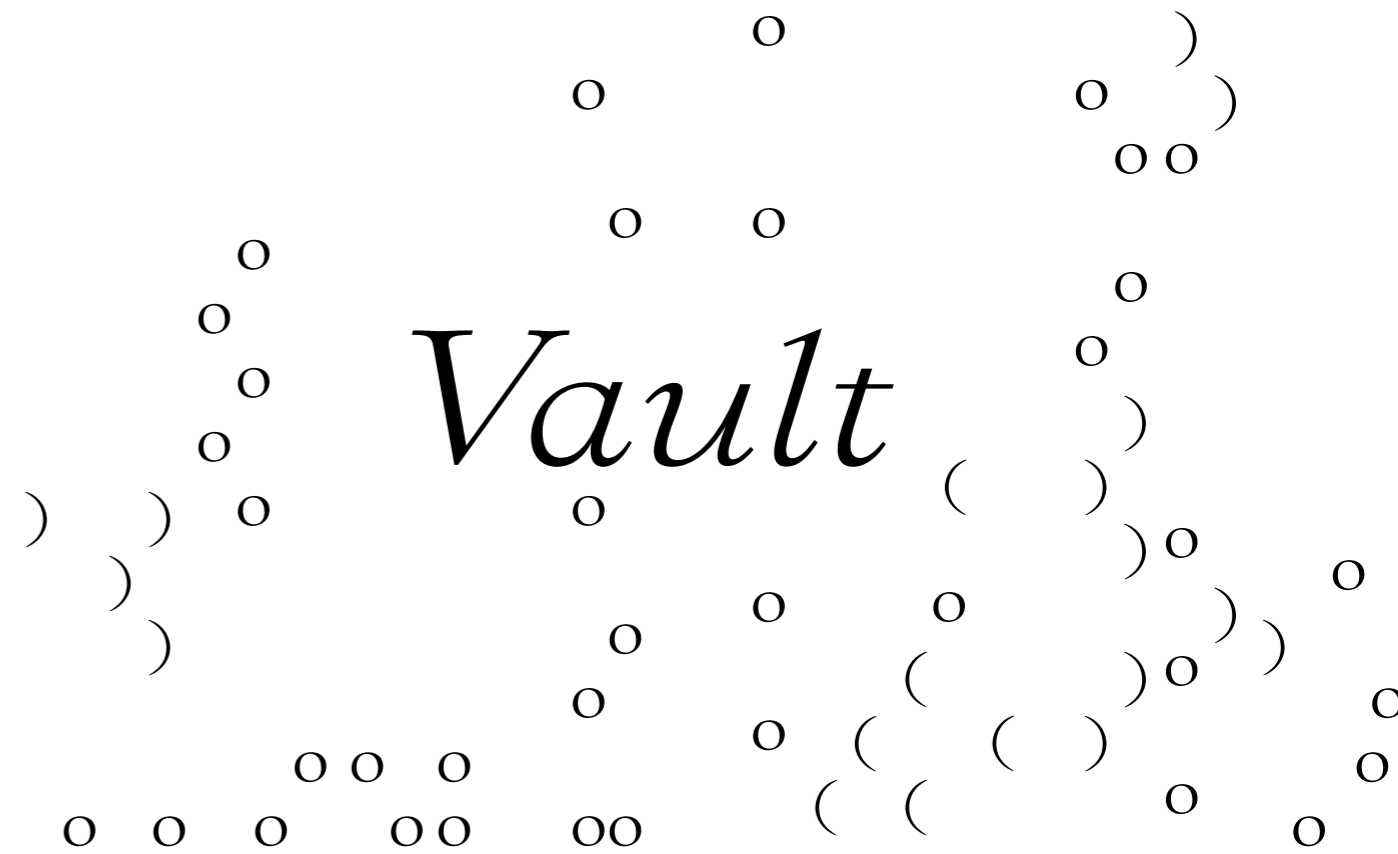


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Benedikte Bjerre  
*Vault*  
Exhibition period: 18.02.2023 - 30.04.2023

O-OVERGADEN  
Overgaden nedent vandet 17, 1414 København K,  
overgaden.org



# Vault

## FOREWORD

The dire inequality of Western contemporary life—cooked to a swirling speed on gas, sugar, and coffee, demanding ever more futuristic, transitory living conditions, delivered 24/7 by exhausted bodies—sits at the core of Danish artist Benedikte Bjerre's (b. 1987) practice. Whether washing machines, diapers from newborns, coffee makers, human-scaled transport cases, or helium balloon chickens, her works build on our most recognizable everyday objects. With a cunning and witty touch, she pinpoints the absurdities of our societal circulations and infrastructure.

At O—Overgaden, for Bjerre's first grand-scale institutional solo show in her native Denmark, a new piece, *Day to Day*, takes center stage. Six monumental human-sized silvery containers—shaped like arches cut in the middle almost like two halves of a brain or human lungs—are placed, serially, in the central nave of the exhibition space. The pieces—installed in Christianshavn, an old shipping harbor of Copenhagen—are modeled on FedEx air cargo containers, produced to fit the main body of an airplane and maximize transport space, thus assuring the delivery of selected items to you from anywhere on the globe within hours or, as the title indicates, from *Day to Day*.

Entirely enclosed as minimal monolithic vaults, the blank aluminum containers physically indicate the commercial logic of access for some and inaccessibility for the many when it comes to entering the space odyssey of our contemporary condition: who can and cannot benefit from the sci-fi portals of today's overnight delivery?

Alongside *Day to Day*, Bjerre presents *Starry Night*, a series of bronzes cast from slices of Lidl bread. As unique pieces modeled on the most basic nourishment one can find, the works emphasize the capitalist reality of our everyday grind: bread on the table comes only if you pay up. Meanwhile the title, *Starry Night*, borrowed from Van Gogh's infamously expensive blockbuster painting, connects the circulation of fundamental and super cheap bread to how the unaffordable modernist painting is today circulated in endless copies as poster art.

In this publication, these two sculptural pieces are discussed by an international set of voices: writer, editor, and curator Pablo Larios; editor and critic Nanna Friis; and curator Carina Bukuts. It is a great pleasure to introduce these ample words, growing out of Bjerre's most recent developments and I would like to deeply thank the contributors. Moreover, a heartfelt thank you to the Augustinus Foundation for supporting this endeavor and, of course, to the team at O—Overgaden. Last, but not least, a most grateful thank you to Benedikte for the consistent clarity, generosity, and dedication making this exhibition, and for sharing your work with us.

Rhea Dall,  
Director, March 2023

# A SENSE OF SATIATION

ON BENEDIKTE BJERRE

Pablo Larios

*Satiation may be described as the reduction in effectiveness of a stimulus with continued exposure. The concept has been invoked to account for a number of diverse phenomena, loss of word meaning with repetition, visual alternation during fixation of ambiguous figures, boredom, alternation behavior of rats in a T maze, and diagnosis of brain lesion.<sup>1</sup>*

In March 2021, just over a year after the start of the global Covid-19 pandemic and the following lockdowns, images began circulating of a huge container ship lodged in Egypt's Suez Canal, unable to move. Aerial imagery showed the container ship, loaded with hundreds of standard-size containers, stuck in place within a jade-green canal surrounded by desert sand.

The ship, the 400-metre-long *Ever Given*, was a Japanese-owned vessel that had landed there on its way from China to Europe before being unexpectedly moored for six days. The obstruction of the ship's passage was caused by a sandstorm, which compromised the ship's ability to steer. As part of the knock-on effects of the *Ever Given's* frozen tracks, nearly 400 ships were subsequently blocked.

The *Ever Given* itself was lodged for six days. As images circulated worldwide, part of the broad interest in the *Ever Given's* aquatic traffic jam was due to the fact that, ever since the pandemic, a series of supply chain disruptions, and changes in supply and demand, had resulted in obstructions to our everyday reality as consumers: shortages, delayed shipping, price surges and, later, an inflationary cost-of-living surge. The metonymic figure for these macro-economic effects was the stranded container ship.

At the same time, consumer interest was paradoxically fueled by the lockdown measures, as many people around the world were stuck in place with no restaurants to go to, no lengthy commutes, and (for some) a surge in cash, as well as a sudden desire to stock up on goods, including for entertainment (the surge in home cooking, only partly a necessity) or preparation. (Many, of course, were not so fortunate.) In 2023, this year's inflationary experiences and the cost-of-living crisis came in dramatic contrast to 2020 and 2021, which saw record profits for the corporate sector.

The work of Benedikte Bjerre is an exploration of the phenomenological, spatial, temporal, and affective systems invoked by our increasing entanglement with the commodity realm. Her work points to a certain irreducible or sublime complexity that often lies beneath our initially transactional relationship to objects and goods. As she shows, this relationship (between buyers and products) transcends the transactional and bleeds into the affective and constitutive understandings of a selfhood increasingly predicated on an experience of separation between time and space. I mention the meme effect of a widespread fixation on the *Ever Given's* frozen passage because of what it reveals about the consumption of imagery, but also the way in which trade routes and the circulation of materials in the era of high globalization can be said to mirror certain self-conceptions of fluidity, adaptability, transfer, and exchange that are emblematic of contemporary subjecthood. If these impersonal trade routes are subject to the projective transferences of our self-conception as individuals, then it is hardly coincidental that the stuck shipping container became an iconic image of our pandemic era of stay-in-place restrictions and control.

*Day to Day*, Bjerre's six sculptures reminiscent of cut-in-half air cargo containers, displayed for the first time at O—Overgaden, are 1:1 scale replicas of international air shipping containers or unit-load devices, curved at the top to accommodate the curvature of aircraft. With its title communicating ubiquity, Bjerre shows her interest in the spatial narratives that belie our increasingly complex systems of trade, consumption, and identification. Here, the vault-like, impersonal and monolithic abstraction of the objects comes at an apparent contrast to the in-time, real-time, algorithmically generated illusion of choice that sends materials chuting through these hangar-like vaults. Broadly, whether it's a concern with the domestic or affective labor and gender, or with the analysis of trade as a social and spatial system, or a more phenomenological interest in slippages between space and time, her work uncovers an almost quantum level of complexity in our relationships with objects.

Bjerre increasingly works in sculpture, but one point of departure from her work is the semiotics implied by theories of the photograph. Just as classical semiotics understood a tripartite structure to the sign (signified, signifier, referent), then the photograph (classically understood) can be seen as adhering to this semiological model in which a photograph always refers to something (which is in principle not seen): the referent, which is *actually there* yet exists on a separate spatial and temporal plane to the sign. Bjerre has unfolded and expanded this principle (of the separation of the sign-referent relationship) to consider not the photograph or print but the *object* as a kind of imprint with an analogical, semiological structure. Yet, if a photograph has its referent, then what does an object refer to? Often, Bjerre's work suggests, this semiological relationship points back to an emotional or affective relationship, one that exists more or less in the head and the gut and the body, as much as "out there" in the real world.

As an expansion of the model implied by photography, it is instructive to think back on the semiology of the image because any photographic representation implies a confluence of time (shutter speed) and space. Might objects not also contain temporalities, buried and unseen referents, and systems of spatial organizations? And, as her work modeled on shipping containers suggests, these objects begin to give a peek into a slippage that occurs between time and space as they are encoded within our realm of objects. Consider one such instance of slippage: In the age of Amazon Prime, predictive algorithms can, in real-time, estimate consumer patterns to the degree that, effectively, a product begins to be shipped to a consumer before it is even purchased. The algorithms that govern our everyday experience cannot tell that a certain individual will certainly purchase X or Y product, but they can estimate that a number of products will need to be delivered to a certain region within a certain timeframe, and so the supply chain begins before the consumer clicks "buy". In this way, time is bent, and prediction comes to be incorporated into the supply chain, stitching time, all while still being dependent on the contours of space.

Bjerre's fascination with formats and formatting extends to her approach to installation, which begins with a careful analysis of the layout and formatting of the space, in order to explore both its parameters as well as our human-scale relationship to the organizing of matter.

One key work for Bjerre is the project *Lisa's Chickens (Farm Life)* (2022), in which Bjerre inflated 50 balloons shaped like chickens and spread them across the exhibition space. On each chicken, a tag was applied, given the name of one of the 50 most common girls' names in the country in which the work was shown. Always interested in seriality and iterability, here Bjerre applied her statistical understanding (always close to an exercise in probability and thus forecasting) to the apparent absurdity of chickens over an exhibition space, while remaining interested in the diminutive gender role ascribed and performed by the word "chick".

Her installation *Starry Night* (2022), also at O—Overgaden, carries a similar constellation of material, somehow dematerialized matter, in order to investigate the particular psychologized, economized, and gendered space known as the domestic. From afar, the work seems to form a galaxy of organic material, installed on the walls and ceiling of an exhibition space. Getting closer, the individual fragments in the installation appear to be cast bread: an everyday consumer item, at once the "bread and butter" (basic matter) of consumption, and a material so basic and ubiquitous as to be nearly overlooked. Here, as elsewhere, her works make several suggestions that get at the core of some of the unstable entanglements between space, time, objecthood, and affect that mark our era—an era of meal-delivery workers, just-in-time production, and frustrated affective laborers.

One point that Bjerre makes is enacted by the title *Starry Night*, which performs a defamiliarization of basic and familiarized material to the point where we cannot see it. This is the point similar to that made in an article titled "On the Lapse of Verbal Meaning with Repetition", in which the authors study the following phenomenon: "It is well known that if a familiar word be stared at for a time, or repeated aloud over and over again, the meaning drops away."

This phenomenon ("verbal satiation" and "semantic satiation") refers to a semantics of loss through ubiquity. In Bjerre's application, she points to the fact that our phenomenology of objects is based not on conscious apperception but on an overlooking or suppression or deletion of observed matter within an inventory of things predicated on repetition, endlessness, and infinitude. Second, she connects this process of defamiliarization to the transcendental categories of space and time (hence the galaxy-like installation). And third, she explores everyday and domestic items (casts of bread sourced from the budget supermarket Lidl), which implies, for one, an emergent phenomenology of the domestic, including our gender and labor identities. In each case, the result is to suggest that our understanding of matter, and therefore also ourselves, is more manifold and entangled than it might initially seem.

1. Donald Smith and Alton Raygor, "Verbal Satiation and Personality," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 52(3), 1956.

# SCIENCE FICTION

Nanna Friis

In this symmetrical, minimal grouping, there are six sculptural copies of highly functional items. As objects, artworks, they do not attempt to be anything but a copy. They are six aluminum blocks but the significance of the artwork and the exhibition space coats them like lacquer. They have a title: *Day to Day*. It strips them of their potential of not also being a story, and the same thing happens to the bronze slices. Here's the cargo transport, one of global multi-capitalism's most sacred vows. Here's the bread and the nutrition and a possible beauty. Here's the devastating and vital will of globalization, gradually a force of nature on par with the earthquakes it causes. Here are the supply chains and the inequality, all of our infrastructure. Here are our valuables. And here is art as a way of catching your breath amid a schematic consumer reality. Here is art as an objective statement and as a discovery, satiated with potential emotions.

A line runs through the totality that is *Vault*; in fact the exhibition contains several lines. Naturally a great deal of lines always exists in sculptural languages drawing close to the geometrically minimal, but almost like architecture, the things themselves create an axis. A symmetrical and effortless movement forward, aluminum to all sides. Is this a sacred or cynical space? Is consumption sacred or cynical? Cynicism can exist at one end of the axis, sacredness at the other. At one end, cool, actual cubes; at the other, sensibility and all the things we make up. A container is a metal shell, a seemingly neutral element in keeping up infrastructure, but infrastructure is power too. Bread is survival or discount.

Objectivity seems given when you work with shaping things in the way Benedikte Bjerre does. The things are what they seem and one of objectivity's key principles must be this particular transparency between inner and outer. What you see is what you see. But in striving for objectivity there is also a hope for—or a belief in the presence of—indisputable truth. The non-modified art object as a tool for underlining how reality is made up of bread and aluminum and air cargo and, with that, also of hunger and nightshifts and ruthless exploitation of resources and numerous meltdowns. There is a line from reality to poetry and it can be very short or very long and the artwork might blur it, maybe even dissolve it. *Vault* is that kind of line.

A night can be many different things. A sleepless challenge or straight-up suffering for the hungry ones, a working day for some, particularly effective for moving stuff around, the almost caricatured arena of melancholic poetry, (an expectation of) utter silence. Through the darkness, fields are growing too. Goods arrive and the sky doesn't know that nights are for resting. Up here, darkness is a condition just as suited for movement as daylight. And, of course, a night is original romance.

Benedikte Bjerre's exhibition isn't a night. It is bronze and aluminum and an unsentimental handling of recognizable objects from the real world, but it shares certain moods and possibilities with the night. Perhaps there's room for more ambivalence and fiction between works that strive for formal objectivity. Bjerre's bronze breads are bread and they are bronze. They hang on walls and on ceilings and look like slices of bronze but they also look like a starry sky. And a starry sky looks like a fairytale. Besides the fairytale and the prosaic reality, bread is also food, possibly food in its most fundamental form. This particular bread, later cast into precious images, is some of the cheapest bread you can buy. Who can't afford bread and romance?

Who can't afford sleeping at night? For whom does the night equal the duty of being available to the unstoppable transport needs of this planet? We have long decided that receiving our purchases as quickly as possible is almost a human right—a human with bigger clout and sanctioning potential than the right to live, for instance. And so, six containers stand on a floor. They are hollow shells of aluminum looking like a certain type of transport container, so-called ULD containers, shaped so they can fit into a cargo plane unhindered.

# WHO'S AFRAID OF MINIMALISM?

Carina Bukuts

Safety is a condition that rarely occurs on its own. Often, it's driven by anxieties—the fear that something can and will go wrong if we're not careful enough. Safety is a state of precaution.

In international shipping, goods, letters, and objects are carefully packed, sealed and put into ULD containers before being loaded onto an aircraft as cargo. Benedikte Bjerre's series of large-scale aluminum sculptures *Odyssey* (2023), presented as part of her exhibition *Vault* at O—Overgaden, is modeled on such units. Displayed in a group of six, they form a corridor, calling to mind the use of the corridor by artists such as Bruce Nauman as a means of creating architectural environments that emphasize the limitations of space. While Nauman's works are famously discomforting due to their narrowness, here it is the seductive surface of Bjerre's curved aluminum plates that does not seem trustworthy. If there's one lesson we have learned, it is that no material is ever objective.

When walking through the containers, the bodies of the visitors are not only reflected in the metal but also appear blurry and distorted. In his 1967 essay "Art and Objecthood," Michael Fried saw such acts of engagement with the physicality of the visitors as a failure of minimal art, arguing it would detach the viewer from a "purely" aesthetic experience. Today, this criticism and the boxes art had to check in order to fit into such categorial thinking no longer seem appropriate. However, Fried's essay offers a compelling example of a fear of minimalism—a fear that the rules, carefully learned, no longer apply. Removed from their original context up in the sky and presented with no opening, what Bjerre's containers carry (if anything) and what lies behind one's own reflection in the aluminum remain a mystery. In this regard, the artist seems to suggest that—as so often—it's the unknown we fear most. It seems oddly fitting then that the words "freight" and "fright" are almost identical.

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EXPRESS LANES  
NEXT EXIT  
Sahara Ave  
4 MILES

LEFT  
EXPRESS  
LANES  
ENTRANCE

SPEED  
LIMIT  
65

HEALTHSOUTH

WALKER

RUSSELL ROAD













# SCIENCE FICTION

Nanna Friis

I denne symmetriske minimale gruppering er genstand, og som objekter, kunstværker, prøver de ikke at være andet end denne kopi. De er seks aluminiumsklodser, men kunstværkets og -rummets signifikans omslutter dem som en lak. De har en titel, *Day to Day*. Den fratager dem muligheden for ikke også at være en historie, og det samme sker for bronzeskulptivene: Her er varetansporten, et af den verdensomspændende multikapitalismes allerhelligste løfter. Her er brødet og næringen og en mulig skønhed. Her er globaliseringens ødelæggende og livsnødvendige vilje, en naturkraft efterhånden på linje med de jordskælv den forårsager, her er fornyingskædderne og uligheden, al vores infrastruktur. Her er vores værdiggenstande. Og hver kunstnens som en måde at få vejret på midt i en skematisk forbrugsvirkelighed, her er kunsten som en nøgtern konstatering og altså også som en opdagelse, der er mættet af mulige føljeser.

En linje løber gennem den helhed, *Vault* er. Udstillingen har flere linjer i sig, naturligvis findes der altid en del rette linjer i de skulptursprog, der nærmest sig det geometriske minimale, men næsten som arkitektur skaber selve tingene en akse.

En symmetrisk og ubesværet bevægelse fremad, aluminium til alle sider, er det et sakralt eller et kynisk rum. Et forbrug sakralt eller kynisk. I den ene ende af akserne kan kynismen befinde sig, i den anden heligholdelsen. I den ene ende kølige, virkelige firkanter, i den anden sensibiliteten, og det vi finder på. En container er et metalykstil, et umiddelbart neutralt element i opretholdelsen af infrastruktur, men infrastruktur er også magt. Toastbrød er overlevelse eller discount.

Objektiviteten virker givet, når man arbejder med formgivning på den måde, Benedikte Bjerre gør. Tingene er, hvad de giver sig ud for at være, og et grundprincip for objektivitet må være netop denne transparens mellem et indre og et ydre.

What you see is what you see. Men i bestræbelsen på objektivitet findes også et håb om – eller en tro på tilstedeværelse af – indiskutable sandhed. Det ikke-modificerede (kunst)objekt som redskab til at undersøge, hvordan virkeligheden er udgjort af brød og aluminium og flytransport og dermed også nedsmeltning. Der går en linje fra virkelighed til poesi, og den kan være meget kort eller meget lang, og kunstværket kan måske sløre den, måske helt ophæve den. *Vault* er sådan en linje.

En nat kan være mange ting. Søvnløst udfordrende eller en stråligt uplidelse for de sulne, en arbejdsdag for visse arbejdere, særligt effektiv at bevæge sig i; den melanolske poesis næsten karikerede arena, (en forventning om) dyb stilhed. Gennem mørket gør også markerne, varer ankommer, og himlen ved ikke, at natten er til at hvile sig i – her er mørke en tilstand, der er ligeså egnet til bevægelse som dagslys. Og en nat er jo original romantik.

Benedikte Bjerres udstilling er ikke en nat. Den er bronze og aluminium og en usentimental omgang med genstande fra virkeligheden, men den deles med natten om visse stemninger og muligheder. Måske er der plads til mere ambivalens og fiktion mellem værker, som efterstræber formel objektivitet. Bjerres bronzbrød er brød og de er bronze, de hænger på vægge og loftet og ligner brødskiver af bronze, men de ligner også en stjernehimmel. Og en stjernehimmel ligner et eventyr. Ved siden af eventyret og den nøgterne virkelighed er brød mad, måske mad i sin mest fundamentale form, og det brød, der er blevet støbt til kostbare biller, er noget af det billigste brød, man kan opstøve i dette land. Hvem har ikke råd til brød og romantik.

Hvem har ikke råd til at sove om natten. For hvem er natten en pligt til at stå til rådighed for klodens ustoppelige transportbehov. Vi har for længst besluttet, at det næsten er en menneskeret at modtage sine indkøb hurtigst muligt, en menneskeret med store gennemsnitskrafte og sanktioneringspotentiale end f.eks. retten til at leve. Således står seks beholdere på et gulv og er hule skaller af aluminium, de ligner en bestemt type transportcontainer, såkaldte ULD-containere, der er formet, så de kan føres ubesværet ind i varetansporterede fly.

# HVEM ER BANGE FOR MINIMALISME?

Carina Bukuts

Sikkerhed er sjældent noget, der kommer af sig selv. Ofte er behovet for sikkerhed drevet af angst, frygten for, at noget kan og vil gå galt, hvis ikke vi er forsigtige nok. Sikkerhed handler om forholdsglæder.

Ved internationale forskningsresultater bliver varer, breve og genstande omhyggeligt pakket, forseglet og lagt i ULD-containere, før lasten læsses på flyet.

Benedikte Bjerres serie af store aluminiumsskulpturer *Day to Day* (2023), præsenteret som en del af hendes udstilling *Vault* på O – Overgaden, er formet efter sådanne enheder. Udstillert som en serie af seks skulpturer, danner containerne en korridor, som leder tankerne i retning af kunstneren Bruce Nauman, og hvordan han brugte korridoren til at skabe arkitektoniske miljøer, der understreger rummets begrebsninger. Hvor det i Naumans værker er snæverheden, der er betømt for at vække utilpashed, er det den forførende overflade på Bjerres bøjede aluminiumsplader, der ikke synes til at stole på. Hvis der er en lektion, vi har lært, er det, at intet materiale nogensinde er objektivt.

Når man går gennem korridoren af containere, reflekteres kroppen ikke kun, den fremstår også sløret og forvængt. I essayet *Art and Objecthood* (1967) argumenterede kunstteoretiker Michael Fried for, at en sådan involvering af publikum var en fasko for den minimalistiske kunst, fordi den forhindrede en rent æstetisk oplevelse. I dag forekommer denne kritik, og de boks kunstner skulle tjekke af for at stemme overens med en så kategorisk tænkning.

Friids essay som et overbevisende eksempel på en frygt for minimalisme. En frygt for at de regler, man omhyggeligt har lært, ikke længere gælder. Fjernet fra deres oprindelige kontekst oppe i luft rummet, og præsenteret uden nogen åbning, forbliver det et mysterium, hvad Bjerres containere indeholder (hvis i aluminiummet. I denne sammenhæng synes kunstneren at antyde, at det – som så ofte – er det ukendte vi frygter mest. Det virker underligt passende, at ordene "frygt" og "frygt" er nærmest identiske.

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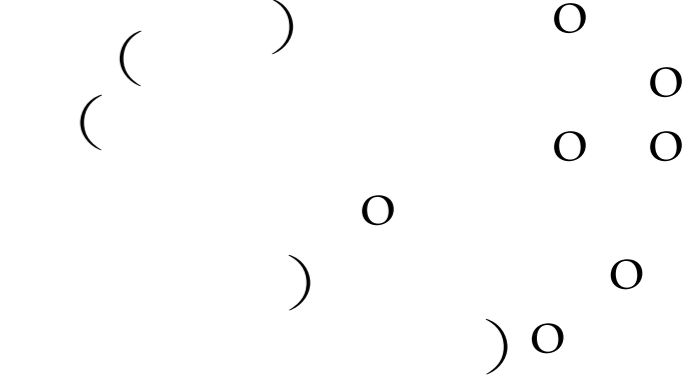


# EN FORNEM- MELSE AF MÆTNING

Pablo Laríos

*Satiation may be described as the reduction in effectiveness of a stimulus with continued exposure. The concept has been invoked to account for a number of diverse phenomena, loss of word meaning with repetition, visual alternation during fixation of ambiguous figures, boredom, alternation behavior of rats in a T maze, and diagnosis of brain lesion.*

— Donald Smith and Alison Kaygor,  
"Verbal satiation and personality",  
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Samtidig blev en ny forbrugertilfælde – paradoksalt erhvervsskatorn havde rekordoverskud.

i dramatisk kontrast til årene 2020 og 2021, hvor (hobby). Nu, i år 2023, står inflation og fødevarerpriser ikke privilligerede nok til bare at have madlavning som dels på grund af nødvendighed (mange var selvfølgelig forbrug. Der opstod et behov for at hamstre varer: nogle) betød det flere penge på lommen og et stigende kunne ikke gå på restaurant, skulle ikke pendle, og (for nok – øget af nedlukningerne. Folk blev hjemme, Samtidig blev en ny forbrugertilfælde – paradoksalt

Benedikte Bjertes arbejde er en undersøgelse af de fænomnologiske, rumlige, tidlige og affektive systemer, der sættes i gang af en øget sammenhæng mellem menneske og handelssektor. Hendes værker peger på den udede eller sublimale kompleksitet, relationer til genstande og varer. Hun demonstret, hvordan forholdet mellem forbrugere og produkter transscenderer selve transaktionen, hvordan det blander sig med de affektive selvforståelser, der i stigende grad betinges af adskillige mellem tid og rum. Jeg fremhæver meme-effekterne ved det strandede skib, fordi det siger noget om forbrug af billeder. Men også fordi det peger på måder, hvorpå handelsruer og varecirkulation i højgløbaliseringens era kan spille opfatterser af fluiditet, tilpasningssevner, af overførsler og udvekslinger – alt sammen noget, der er emblematiske for forståelsen af det moderne subjekt. Hvis ansigtsløse handelsruer er genstand for projektioner af individets selvopfattelse, er det næppe tilfældigt, at et strandet containereskib blev et ikonisk billede på en pandemi med udgangsforbud, restriktioner og kontrol. De seks skulpturer i værket *Day to Day*, der vises for første gang på Ø – Overgaden, er 1:1-replikker af luftfragtcontainerne (såkaldte ULD-containere), formet så de passer til flyrummets kurve. Med en titel der signalerer allestedsnærværelse, demonstreter Bjerte sin interesse for de rumlige narrativer, og hvordan de omfatter stadig mere komplekse udlægninger af handel, forbrug og identifikation. Her står den bankboks-agtige, anonyme og monolitiske abstraktion over objekterne i kontrast til algoritmegegenerede illusioner om de valg, der får varer til at glide gennem de hangarhængende bokse. Uanset om værket beskæftiger sig med husligt, affektive (og deraf kønnet) arbejde, om det snarere er en analyse af handel som et socialt og rumligt system – eller om det i virkeligheden antyder en fænomnologisk interesse i skred mellem tid og rum – afdekker Bjertes arbejde en kompleksitet i vores relationer til objekter, der nærmest er på kvantniveau.

Bjerte arbejder i stigende grad med skulptur, men det er fotografiets semiotik, der ligger til grund for hendes praksis. Ligesom klassisk semiotik opererer regnet som en teppartsstruktur (det betegnede, den betegnende, referenten), knytter fotografier sig i traditionel forstand til den semiotiske model – hvor selve fotoet altid refererer til noget (der i principet ikke er synligt). Referenten, som *faktisk er der*, men eksisterer på et rumligt og tidsmæssigt plan adskilt fra regner.



Bjerte har udfoldet og udvidet dette princip (om adskillelsen af tegn-referent forholdet) til at opfatte netop objekter – frem for fotografier eller printet – som en slags aftryk med analog, semnologisk struktur. Men hvis et fotografi har sin referent, hvad refererer objekter så til? Ofte, antyder Bjertes arbejde, peger semiotiske forhold tilbage på det emotionelle eller affektive, der eksisterer lige så meget i hovedet og i tarmen og i kroppen, som "derude" i den virkelige verden.

Med denne udvidelse af fotografiets model giver det mening at forholde sig til billedets semiotik. Enhver fotografisk repræsentation medfører et sammenhæng af (ulikke)tid og rum. Kan objekter ikke også indeholde rumlig organisering? Som fragtcontainerformen i Bjertes værk indikerer, er objekterne også et smuglig til det skred, der foregår mellem tid og rum, når det finder vej ind i vores objektverden. Forestil dig dette skred: I Amazon Prime-æraen kan algoritmer, i realtid, forudsæ forbrugs mønstre i et omfang, hvor produkter kan blive gjort klart til shipping, før de er købt. De algoritmer, der følger vores daglige mønstre, kan ikke forudsige, at en specifik person med sikkerhed vil købe X eller Y produkt, men de kan vurdere, at et antal produkter skal leveres til den og den region inden for den og den tidsramme, og på den måde begynder forbrugsæraen allerede inden, forbrugeren klikker på "køb". Tiden bliver altså bøjet. Forudsigelse bliver en del af forbrugsæraen, de handler proaktivt, men er stadig afhængige af rummets konturer.

Bjertes fascination af formater og formatering gælder også hendes tilgang til installation. Den starter med en omhyggelig gennemgang af rummets udformning, der ligger til grund for videre undersøgelse af, hvordan vi med vores menneskeskala organiserer skulpturstof. Et af Bjertes vigtigste værker er *Lisa's Chickens (Farm Life)* (2022), hvor 50 hønseformede balloner blev puster op og spredt rundt i udstillingsrummet. På hver hønse sad et skilt med et af de 50 mest populære pigevavnede i det land, værket blev vist. Udover en vedholdende interesse for det scerelle og repetitive, anvender Bjerte her sin statistiske forståelse (der nærmer sig sandsynlighedsregning og, dermed, prognoser) til at påpege det umiddelbart absurde ved hønse i et udstillingsrum. Samtidig er hun interesseret i den nedvurderede kønsrolle, der knyttes til og performeres af ordet "chick".

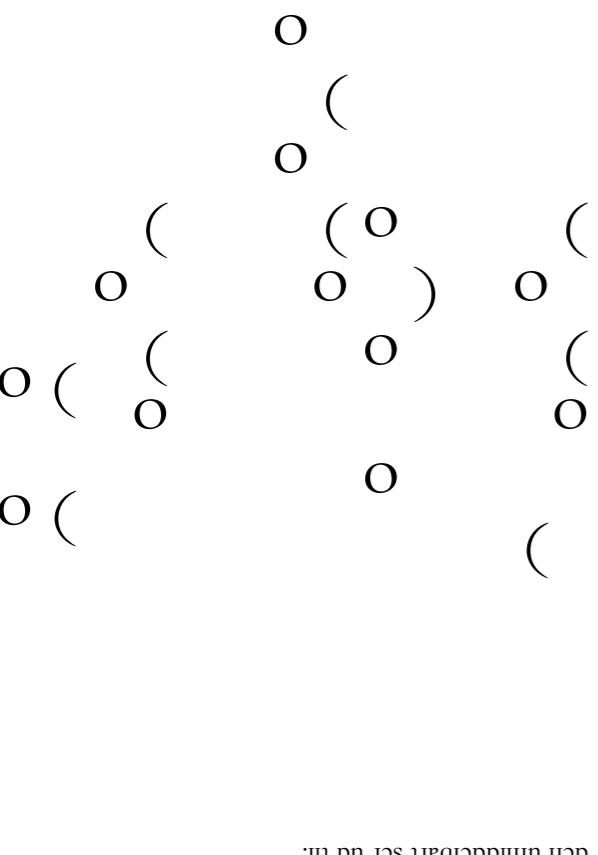
Hendes installation på Ø – Overgaden, *Starry Night* (2022), indeholder en lignende sammensætning af materialer. En art dematerialiseret stof, der undersøger det særligt psykologiserede, økonomiserede, kønede rum vi kender som "hjemmet". På afstand ligner værket en slags galakse af organisk materiale, installeret på udstillingsrummets vægge og på loftet. Træder man nærmere, viser det sig, at hvert "stjernefragment" er en brødskrive: Et hverdagsprodukt – dels som i "brød og smør", en basal forbrugskategori – og dels en vare, der er så normal og tilgængelig, at den nemt bliver overset.



Hendes værker antyder, på Ø – Overgaden såvel som i andre kontekster, en række forskellige tematikker, der sammen forsøger at nærme sig kerne af de ustabile relationer mellem tid og rum og tingsliggørelse og affekt, som i den grad præger vores samtid – en samtid af madudbringning, lynproduktion og frusterede servicemedarbejdere.

En af Bjertes hovedpointer tydeliggøres med titlen *Starry Night*, der fremmedgør et velkendt materiale til et punkt, hvor vi ikke kan genkende det. Denne pointe læner sig op ad analysen i artiklen "On the Lapse of Verbal Meaning with Repetition", hvor forfatterne studerer et bestemt repetitionsfænommen: "It is well known that if a familiar word be stared at for a time, or repeated aloud over and over again, the meaning drops away."

Dette fænomnen ("verbal mætning" og "semantisk mætning") referer til det semantiske tab, der er en konsekvens af allestedsnærværelsen. Bjertes bearbejdning af fænomnet peger på, at vores objektækonomologi og desuden peger på køns- og arbejdsideantiteter. I hvert af tilfældene tyder alt altså på, at vores forståelse af stoffet, og dermed også af den umiddelbart ser ud til.



# ERGADEN

OOOOO

O - OVERGADEN  
Overgaden nedenunder 17, 1414 København K,  
overgaden.org

Benedikte Bjerre  
Vault  
Udstillingsperiode: 18.02.2023 - 30.04.2023

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På O - Overgaden, i Bjerres første institutionelle soloudstilling i Danmark, indtager et stort nyt værk, *Day to Day*, hovedrollen. Seks sølvskinnende containere, formet som halverede hvælvninger, der kunne ligne to hjernehalvdelen eller lunger, er placeret serielt ned gennem udstillingsrummets midterakse. Værkerne er modelleret efter FedBx-containerne til lufttransport, der er tilpasset flyets runding. De buede aluminiumskroppe sælges det transportrum, der sikrer leveringen af produktet direkte til dig i løbet af få timer, eller, som værket titler *Day to Day* indikerer: fra dag til dag;

Den udaltale ulighed i samtidens vestlige samfund - trykkogt på benzín, sukker, kaffe og leveret døgnnet rundt af udmattede kroppe under mere og mere transittigende levillikar - er et omdrejningspunkt i den danske kunstner Benedikte Bjerres (f. 1987) kunstneriske praksis. Om det er vaskemaskiner, bleer, kaffemaskiner, mængesketsore transportkasser eller kyllinger i (helium)ballonform, tager hendes værker udgangspunkt i vores mest genkendelige hverdagsobjekter. Med lige dele analytisk skarphed og humor peger hun på absurditeterne i vores samfunds økonomiske kredsløb og infrastruktur.

Udover *Day to Day* viser Bjerre værksereen *Starry Night*: en række bronzefatsøbninger af brødskeiver fra Lidl. Som små, unikke skulpturer, der er formgivet efter en af vores mest basale næringskilder, understreger værksereen den finansielle realitet bag vores hverdagslid: der kommer kun brød på bordet, hvis man betaler. Samtidig er titlen *Starry Night* - der er lånt fra Van Goghs famøse og uhyrt kostbare blockuster-maleri - med til at forbinde massedistributoren af det basale og superbillige brød med det ubetalelige modernistiske maleri, der i billig plakatform fylder vægge verden over, distribueret i en uendelig mængde kopier.

Containernes fuldkommen forseglede, monolitiske blokke antyder den kommercielle logik omkring adgang for nogle og utilgængelighed for mange, når det kommer til at træde ind i vores samfunds rumtjese: hvem kan og kan ikke drage fordel af sci-fi-portalerne til dag-til-dag-levering?

I denne publikation bliver disse to skulpturværker - som begge spørger ind til samtidens økonomier - analyseret af et sæt internationale stemmer: kurator Carina Bukur, skribent, redaktør og kurator Pablo Larios og redaktør og kunstkritiker Nanna Friis. Det er en stor glæde at introducere deres ord, der gror ud af Bjerres seneste udvikling som kunstner. Her skal falde en stor og varm tak til bidragsyderne til denne publikation og selvfølgelig til alle ansatte på O - Overgaden. Sidst, men ikke mindst, en stor tak til Benedikte for at bidrage med så stor generøsitet og dedikation i arbejdet med at skabe denne udstilling - og ikke mindst for et varmt og nærværende samarbejde.

Rhea Dall,  
Leder, marts 2023

