

Victor Bengtsson



*Horse droppings
are not figs*



OOOOO

OVERGADEN

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O – OVERGADEN
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INTRODUKTION

I tråd med denne fejlfyldte arkæologi skildrer motivernes douce, mættede farver af cadmiumrød/lilla og koboltgrøn en verden, der er vendt på hovedet, gået galt: en landlig høst i en surrealistisk tumult af overdimensionerede grøntsager, en teglbelagt plov ude af proportioner, brændende huse, en enorm fiskekrog, dissekerede karper og grise, der bliver til ruser.

Over det store maleri er der lagt et serielt, blåt dyremotiv med en lys stjerne i midten. Et mørkt emblem, baseret på den håndgestus, der danner konturen af en ged, som med en hilsen til amerikansk popkunst understreger Bengtssons legende, næsten rebelske generobring af det historiske vægtæppe. I en anden værkserie er en række grise udskåret af malerlærred efter et gör-det-selv origamimønster. Men efterligningerne mangler præcision – grisene er skæve – hvilket understreger, hvordan videnskabelige eller historiske billeddrepræsentationer eller oversættelser aldrig er helt troværdige. Denne leg med en udviskning af skellet mellem sandt og falsk er også tydelig i udstillingens titel *Horse droppings are not figs* eller ‘hestelort er ikke figner’; et hollandsk ordssprog, som peger på, hvordan man ikke skal lade sig narre af udseendet og forveksle hestepærer med figenræts brune, søde frugt.

Samtidig videreføres Bengtssons associative motivverden i en brudt frise, der viser et puslespil af sovende eller døde menneskefigurer og omvendte, forvrængede kroppe. Bengtssons historier, der forklæder sig som klassiske vævninger, gentager således apokalyptiske scenarier – som var de begravede eller nedskunkne. Skyggemotiverne og deres forstyrrede fremstilling af en blanding af tidlige landbrugs- og fiskerkultur op løser forestillingen om en sandfærdig historieskrivning, hvilket bliver et billede på, hvordan pseudovidenskabelige fortællinger stadig lurer bag vores samtidskultur.

Rhea Dall
Leder og chefkurator på O – Overgaden,
Februar 2025

Victor Bengtsson (f. 1997, DK) er autodidakt kunstner med en BA i medicin, der bor og arbejder i København. Han har tidligere udstillet på bl.a. Mendes Wood (São Paulo, 2021; New York, 2022; Bruxelles, 2023); Public Gallery, London (2024); East Contemporary Gallery, Milano (2021); og Someday Gallery, New York (2024). Udstillingen på O – Overgaden er Bengtssons første institutionelle soloudstilling.

HISTORIEN FINDES IKKE

Signe Havsteen

Ursula K. Le Guin (1929-2018) definerer fantasy og science fiction som den ældste og mest universelle form for litteratur i sin hyldest til genren (og forfatterkollegaen Jorge Luis Borges) i bogen *Things not actually present* (2005). Modsat den realistiske litteratur, der begrænser sig til beskrivelser af kulturelt specifikke fænomener, udgøres fantasygenren af såkaldte 'konstanter' eller universelt genkendelige motiver, forklarer hun: "It seems to be a fact that everybody, everywhere, even if they haven't met one before, recognizes a dragon." Victor Bengtssons værker er ikke befolket af drager, men de graver sig ned i de jordlag, vi har bygget vores kulturelle identitet på, og trækker lignende fabeldyr og forestillinger ud i et billedkaos af enhjørningehorn og grise.

Enhjørningen og grisen er vel på mange måder diametrale modsætninger i den kollektive bevidsthed: Grisen lever i sølet, mens den overjordiske enhjørning gerne materialiserer sig i et magisk pust af glitter.

I Magdeburg i 1663 mente den tyske videnskabsmand Otto von Guericke (1602-1686) imidlertid at have fundet bevis for, at enhjørningen fandtes. Det var fundet af et uldent næschorn, som gav anledning til, hvad der i dag kan opleves på Magdeburgs naturhistoriske museum, og som er blevet beskrevet som den værste fossile rekonstruktion nogensinde. Den såkaldte Magdeburg-enhjørning ligner en krydsning mellem en dinosaur, en hest og en giraf uden overkrop og har sin egen Reddit-tråd med p.t. 78.000 likes og et kommentarspor, hvor folk skiftevis morer sig og forarges over det besynderlige fænomen.

I hvilket omfang von Guerickes rekonstruktion skal tages alvorligt, er der delte meninger om, men det er egentlig heller ikke pointen her. Pointen er det relativt flydende felt mellem spekulation og empiri, som både videnskaben og kunsten udfolder sig i, og som Bengtssons billedarkæologier drillende indtager. Han væver kulturelle arketyper som bonden, soldaten og, ja, enhjørningehornet og grisen sammen i sære organiske systemer og kaotiske landskaber, hvor verden tilsyneladende er sprængt i stykker for så at ligge dør og gro sammen igen i weird og vagt genkendelige konstellationer. I det store lærred, der hænger midt i et af de to udstillingsrum, hænger opsprættede fisk til tørre, og monstrøse grøntsager vælter op af jorden. Underlige, griselignende former svæver hen over scenariet og blander sig med synet af en grotesk plov, der baner sig vej igennem landskabet. I den lange frise, der indtager det tilstødende rum, vælter behårede væsner rundt mellem skeletlignende strukturer. Nedfaldne frugter og grøntsager blander sig med løsrevne lemmer i noget,

der mest af alt minder om en rodet blanding af en slagscene og et høstmotiv; og er det norernes hænder, vi kan ane ved en rok? Er de i færd med at spinde disse væsners skæbnetråde, der vikler sig ind og ud af motivet og bliver til reb og kæder, der med magt holder sammen på det hele? Figurer og frugter har slæt rødder i de samme jordlag som sære fossile fragmenter: løsrevne knogler og skeletter; aftrykket af et hjul, hvis dominerende form nu udgøres af de råstoffe, der er groet frem mellem egerne.

Da en meteor for 66 millioner år siden ramte den mexicanske halvø Yucatan, satte det gang i en kædereaktion, som gjorde en ende på jorden, som den dengang så ud. Det efterlod os med rester af de uddøde plante- og dyrearter i jordlagene, der med tiden blev til fossiler, som nu fra tid til anden dukker op til overfladen. Fossiler eller forsteninger er spor eller rester af døde organismer, der bliver til gennem en langvarig proces, hvor fx planter eller dyreskeletter og knogler danner aftryk i jordlagene. Gradvist udskiftes det organiske materiale med omgivende mineraler, der så danner en afstobning af skeletstrukturen. Eller knoglernes hulrum udfyldes af mineraler og skaber et negativt aftryk. Det, vi ser på, når vi ser på fossiler, er således mellemrummet mellem fortid og nutid, fyldt ud med naturens råstoffe, der danner en art spejling af den oprindelige form.

Fossilet tilbyder os tiden i fysisk form, gør den håndgribelig for os. Men som Otto von Guericke's enhjørning vidner om, er fossile rekonstruktioner en kompliceret proces. Eftersom fossilet kun giver os en lille del af helheden, må fundene løbende fortolkes igennem sammenligninger med lignende fund og et indgående kendskab til nulevende dyrs anatomি. I et vist omfang opererer kunsthistorikeren på lignende måder, når hidtil ukendte kilder eller værker dukker op i arkiverne og forsøges udlagt og placeret i et historisk kontinuum. Og det er da heller ikke tilfældigt, at kunsthistoriedisciplinen, der i 1800-tallet fandt sine ben parallelt med udviklingen af evolutionsteorier og nybrud inden for naturvidenskaben, betjente sig af biologiske metaforer. Når den franske kunsthistoriker Hippolyte Taine (1828-1893) i sin *Philosophie de l'art* (1865) formulerede sin metode som 'en form for botanik, anvendt på kunstværker', var det ud fra en forestilling om, at kunstværket ligesom naturens forekomster er et produkt af specifikke vækstbetingelser. Kunsten, kulturen og biologien er uhyggeligt sammenfiltrede.

Både fossilet og kunstværket er vigtige motorer i de fortællinger, vi skaber om os selv og om verden, og som med tiden gror fast i vores bevidsthed. Men hvilke forestillinger og på hvilke præmisser? Det er sådanne spørgsmål, Victor Bengtsson stiller til os og til fremtiden, når han lader umiddelbart genkendelige former og fragmenter fra vestlig kultur- og kunsthistorie flyde ind og ud af hinanden i sine bizarre billedkæder. Et par dage efter, at jeg første gang så disse værker i virkeligheden, kom jeg til at tænke på den engelske maler Edward Burne-Jones' (1833-1898) serie *The Sleeping Beauty* (1871-75).

Jeg tror umiddelbart, det var de sovende bejlede fanget i tornebuskens grene, som gav associationer til de søvngængeragtige, sammenviklede kroppe i Bengtssons frise. Men der er også andre sammenfald. Ikke at Bengtssons grove lærereder og lidt klamme, urovækkende ironi som sådan ligner Burne-Jones' kitschede og porcelænsagtige eventyrfugger. Men de er fælles om motiver, der aktiverer et spekulativt drømmecenter. De er fælles om interessen for slyngede organiske og dekorative former. Og de refererer begge til en europæisk kunsthistorisk tradition i deres værker. Men hvor Burne-Jones' ridderlige fantasier er malet frem med en sensibilitet, der er formet af hans samtidis forfinede dekorative bestræbelser (særligt i form af hans lange samarbejde med William Morris' værksted), er Bengtsson grov og sjov. Og det er ikke yndige blomsterranker, der forbinder hans billedelementer. Det er rebværk og skeletdele, der fletter fragmenterne sammen og lader dem blande sig med lærredets fibre. Hvor Burne-Jones indarbejder dekorative elementer i form af stiliserede planter og former, plasterer Bengtsson sit lærred til med stencilerede håndtegn.

En lidt senere dansk eksponent for Burne-Jones' variationer over middelalderen og den tidlige renæssances billedsprog er maleren Ejnar Nielsen (1872-1956). Begge dyrker de en tilbageskuende melankoli og romantik, selvom Nielsen er anderledes mørk og voldsom. Og som hans malerier fra det lille jyske landsbysamfund i Gjern ved Silkeborg afslører, står han for en mere kolig og illusionsløs undersøgelse af menneskets forankring i naturen og forbindelse til en forhistorie end hans engelske forgænger. Når jeg tænker på både Nielsen og Burne-Jones i forlængelse af Victor Bengtsson, er det, fordi de begge opererer med en historisk bevidsthed og et sæt af kulturelle arketyper, som jeg genkender et svagt ekko af hos Bengtsson, men som han samtidig peger fingre ad. For der er en provokerende spænding i hans værker imellem de kunsthistoriske referencer, der isoleret set afslører en afhængighed af traditionens kontinuitet, og så det, vi faktisk ser på, som mest af alt præsenterer sig som en ond spejling af forbillederne. Kunsthistoriske referencer flyder som en grumset åre igennem Bengtssons værker (man genkender elementer fra hollandske stilleben og folkelivsskildringer og fra en nordeuropæisk tradition for det fortællende historiemaleri), men egentlig lader han mest til at tro på, at historien ikke findes – i hvert fald ikke, som vi tror, vi kender den, og slet ikke som et lineært, sammenhængende forløb.

Den tyske kulturanthropolog Aby Warburg (1866-1929) gjorde netop op med forestillingen om den lineære fortælling, der havde præget kunsthistorieskrivningen siden renæssancen. Han formulerede konceptet "billedfartøj" (Bilderfahrzeuge) som led i en teori om kulturel erindring, der undersøger, hvordan bestemte billedformler og -typer er overlevet fra antikkens visuelle kultur på tværs af tid og geografi. Kulminationen var hans aldrig færdiggjorte *Bilderatlas Mnemosyne*, som igennem anakronistiske sammenstillinger af kunstværker og populærkulturelle

fænomener kortlægger visuelle arketypers vandring op igennem historien på 63 motivisk ordnede plancher beklædt med mørkt tekstil. Billedatasset er gentagne gange blevet kaldt en form for primitiv forløber for Google, hvis billedsøgninger sammenstiller tilsyneladende random materialer. Men Warburgs erindringsatlas var, som atlassen jo er, også et led i en tids bestræbelser på at konstruere og besidde et sammenhængende verdensbillede. Det er lige præcis det, Bengtsson ikke gør, når han peger på, hvordan cementerede forestillinger om vores historie og identitet i virkeligheden er hentet op af dybet fra gabende videnshuller, og altså må være nærmere beslægtet med fantasylitteraturens drager, end vi måske normalt går rundt og tænker.

Victor Bengtssons værker præsenterer sig som upolerede og kaotiske visioner. Malingen er gnubbet ind i råt sækkelærred. Vævningen står bart frem de fleste steder og giver mig lyst til at lade mine fingerspidser røre og rive sig en anelse på fibrene. Det grove materiale vil gradvist gå i forrådnelse over tid, så det er ikke sikkert, at en fjern fremtid vil få glæde af Bengtssons værker. Men skulle planeten blive ramt af en meteor og falde i en tung tornerosesøvn i morgen, er det måske lignende skøre animationer og febervildelser, vores efterladenskaber vil fremkalde i en fjern fremtid? Vi ved det ikke, for selvom vi findes nu, findes historien om os ikke.

APPENDIX

Aske Hyldborg Jensen

Jeg tænker på den allerførste ost i forhold til opmålinger af civilisationens største bedrifter. Verdens kulinariske vidunder. Jeg forestiller mig et osteklæde, hvorigennem den sidste væske vrides ud. At det filtrerer livet ud af mælken, og de derpå følgende innovationer. At det med en blålig strib i midten hæver sig selv over praktikaliteter.

Opfinderen må have insisteret på, at trådene, der snor sig om hinanden, var grund nok til at beholde klædet, at afstanden mellem hver tråd var en forbindelse mellem noget gråt, en kurv til bær og et afløb. Der var ikke meget at gøre, det var trods alt familieklenodier.

Det var det, der var tilbage. At rejse sig for at hilse på nyttilkomne er at stille sig på noget, værne om noget, noget hemmelighedsfuldt, som de stædigt forsøger at forstå. Ligesom logikken i at bo på den nordlige halvkugle. Undergrunden slår hårdt.

Jeg kigger på en firkant, der er gravet i en brun og kompakt dynge jord. På den anden side: de papkasser, jeg har slæbt rundt på det seneste, er kortsigtede. Jeg er ikke længere i stand til at afgøre, om de arter, jeg kigger på, har planker som fodder, om de spiste rust, eller hvordan deres knogler blev dekoreret med metal. Jeg kan ikke afgøre, om vi er den samme slags.

Nogen befinner sig i rituelle positioner, ligger klar til at blive opdaget i deres egen tid. Så ejendommelige, deres vaner. Måden, et sandkorn formes af vand. Der er meget at diskutere og masser at fortolke; fejet ind under gulvtæppet i mangel på bedre steder.

Arbejdet udføres i mørke. Jeg automatiserer; en klods flugter med den næste. Det tager et stykke tid at justere. Kort efter at jeg tændte kontakten, lyste de krummer, der så godt som forer mine slippers. Var de virkelig så beskidte? Og mit værktøj, værktøjet, skabelsesfikseringen, strømliningsfikseringen, en tilfredsstillende tilværelse, en pacificering. Det aldeles ubrugelige skrivebord fyldt med vigtige ting, der aldrig bliver brugt igen. Jeg er nødt til at spore korncirklerne tilbage til deres landbrugsmæssige ophav. En dyb medføelse med kastanjer, og dog forstår jeg stadig ikke bogstaverne. Deres budskab pareres af mine ru håndflader.

Vinterlandskab med fuglefælde. Jeg er stadig ikke sikker på smagen. Sukret krymmel, noget flætet, det er totalt giftigt. Første gang jeg forsøgte mig med indtagelsen af de to, begyndte en implosion af sympati at boble langs med den virkelighed, der foldede sig ud for fodderne af mig. Med panden mod muren i stædige omgivelser hører jeg bilhornene, og min mave vender sig i takt.

Jeg prøvede at støve mig selv af, afholde min næse fra at snuse ind. Et undvigelsesmønster har fundet sin form, det fungerer via fremskrivninger. Rust skaller af, men denne gang ved jeg, hvad jeg skal forvente af laget nedenunder. Firkanter og andre former fylder hele baghaver. Begravet under pools. Jeg er sikker på, at andre ting fra fortidige civilisationer kan føjes til ligningen.

Den ramme, jeg forestillede mig, er idéen om et fragmenteret vers. En kontrakt mellem symbol og sprog. En endeløs tilførsel af flere ord snarere end en mangel på samme.

Jeg forestiller mig, atosten er dehydreret nu, at den er muggen og lugter harsk, og at det er civilisationen. Ethvert hul fyldes automatisk op, ethvert hul er et aktiv. De små firkanter af tidligere verdener er bare endnu en fold i Det Udsøgte Lig. Ens æble er ikke ens æble. De tilfældige elementer beløber sig til ingenting.

Udmattelsens anatomi gør det irrelevant at summe, det samme gælder information. Selv når animeringer er indvævet. De endeløse aflejringer transformerer spejlingen af objekter, gør dem til søjler.

Jeg vil gerne understrege vigtigheden af genanvendelse, også fra et retrospektivt synspunkt. Det lader til at være et mønster, der gennemsyrer alle vores fund, i medgang og modgang. Loops og cirkuleringer. Lad mig lige få vejret et øjeblik.

At skabe et sprog uden knogler. At anerkende knoglers skrøbelige korttidsfunktion. Det er derfor, jeg er plastisk. En knoglefri kurs er et medrivende stykke legetøj. For mange, for lidt tilberedningstid.

Jeg kigger på bægeret med behov i blikket, forpligtet af lysten til at nedsvælge så meget, jeg kan, før det er ødslet bort, før jeg er ødslet bort. Når den sidste dråbe vand får det til at flyde over, kollapser mit hul og skaber et nyt tomrum, der skal fyldes. Jeg stopper væv i dem begge til en start.

Hvilket som helst begær æder sig selv: Det er mit badeveresesmantra. Men det er et udsagn, der på et tidspunkt når sin afslutning. Den indre tid, dagdrømmen. Grønkål bliver til en baby, et jordbær bliver til, bliver til jord. Akkurat ligesom dødsassimileringen og det at blive en stjerne, resuméet af en thriller, historien som disruption-fodskammel, dens selvhævdelses forfald.

Undergrunden er hovedsageligt kaos og lerlommer. Selvom et par latente overnatningssteder dukkede op for nylig. Chokbølgerne afmonterede videre byggeri. De sovende vender sig i sengene. De fandt ikke deres syntese, den selvopslugende musik. Den immaterielle manifestation. Hurtigt efter opdagelsen blev fundet afsløret som intet mindre end en natpotte fra slutningen af 1600-tallet.

Nu kender jeg til det bedste og værste ved, at det aldrig har fundet sted. Bortset fra billeder, der opstår ud af ingenting, den lysende fremtid. Former fremtryller minder. Kroppen er en strårende opfindelse. Jeg tror, den kan fornemme giftig grund.

Svære tider bliver ligtorne, der får berøring til at føles fremmed og gør kompromisløshed formålslos. For meget lindring er selvdestruktivt. Idealerne bliver den altoverskyggende årsag, de efterlader ikke plads til effekten. Dette resulterer i et rustent indre. Aflejrerne er en krop, af og til sædeles mishandlet af begær og udvinding. Et støvkorn tilføjes bunken af stov.

Inderst inde er oplösningen. Skeer, hår, boliger, piller sig selv i navlen, indtil en direkte forbindelse opstår. Langsamt holder kroppen op med at være krop. Afløbsrøret i min gamle lejlighed sprang, en måned efter jeg flyttede.

TROJANSKE GRISE

Olivia Turner

"All fiction is metaphor. Science fiction is a metaphor. What sets it apart from older forms of fiction seems to be its use of new metaphors, drawn from certain great dominants of our contemporary life – science, all the sciences, and technology, and the relativistic and the historical outlook, among them. Space travel is one of these metaphors; so is an alternative society, an alternative biology; the future is another. The future, in fiction, is a metaphor."¹

En frø, der kvæles i luft, fiskeindmad, der løber ud, som var det menneskeindvolde, græskarsesøens modne forrådnelse og det groteske spektakel omkring de trojanske grise er alle sammen motiver, der udvisker grænsen mellem fakta og fiktion, præsenterer et hot take på tidens informationsoverflod og *source generation*. Som et ekko af historiske encyklopædiers pertinentlige absurditet reflekterer Victor Bengtssons værker over konstruktionen af viden og opfordrer samtidig til at sætte spørgsmålstege ved, hvordan historier skrives og opfattes.

Da jeg begyndte mine kunsthistoriestudier i 2019, blev jeg introduceret til italienske Leonardo Bruni, en lærde fra renæssancen, der ofte hylles som stamfader til historiografien: læren om, hvordan historien skrives. Bruni pillede Giovanni Villanis værk *Nuova Cronica* fra hinanden, denne middelalderkrønike om Firenze; han fratog den al hidtidig autoritet og reducerede den til en samling kolde facts. Dermed skabte han, hvad man kunne kalde et "historiografisk tomrum", et rum, han kunne fylde med sit eget humanistiske syn på Firenzes fortid.² I sin avisning af Villanis guddommelighedsfikserede narrativ redefinerede Bruni selve begrebet historie som historien om menneskelig agens og politiske begivenheder; et skift, som er så afgørende og dybt indlejet i vores moderne historieforståelse, at vi ikke skaenker det mange tanker. Som en slags parallel til Brunis metodologi vil jeg mene, at Bengtsson på lignende måder destabiliserer eksisterende myter; han ansporer beskueren til at genoverveje, hvordan viden og historie konstrueres. På samme måde som Bruni gentænkte Firenzes historie,

så den stemte overens med renæssanceidealernes, genfortolker Bengtsson historien gennem opdigtede motiver, pseudohistorisk æstetik og biologilignende illustrationer; alt sammen noget, der opfordrer til genovervejelser af grænsene mellem fakta, fiktion og mytologi. Selvom han overdriver i en grad, så det bliver humoristisk, reflekterer værkerne over, hvordan viden tager form gennem udvælgelse, modifikation eller udeladelse.

Bengtsson og jeg talte om de her ting i hans atelier over et par drinks – alkoholfri øl til mig, fadøl til ham – og på FaceTime, da han travede gennem New Yorks gader, mens jeg, svøbt i tæpper, sad og kæderøg på min altan i København. Vi diskuterede den voksende fejlmargin, det her ingenmandsland mellem videnskab og spekulation, hvor fakta bliver upålidelige, hvor myter forklæder sig som sandhed. På et tidspunkt kom vi uundgåligt omkring AI (det sker altid), men vi blev enige om, at det var for meget. Instagram-reels af Elon Musk og Greta Thunberg, der kysser, aber i smoking, der puster balloner eller deepfakes op, er indbegrebet af den larm, der fylder fornævnte tomrum, men det skulle ikke med i essayet. Nej, det skulle handle om noget meget mere rodet, noget mere virkeligt eller uvirkeligt, afhængigt af hvordan man ser det.

Titlen *Horse droppings are not figs*, et simpelt udsagn ladet med desillusionering og håb, løfter sløret for en hvid løgn, et hollandsk ordsprog, der omfatter akkurat det tomrum, jeg har cirklet omkring i tanker og samtaler. Den hollandske renæssancemaler Pieter Bruegel den Ældre (cirka et århundrede senere end Bruni) malede *De Hollandske Ordsprog* i 1559. Maleriet henvender sig med besynderlig tydelighed til nutiden, nærmest som var dets røde, blå og grønne pigmente blandet med noget 21. århundrede-angst. Midt i kaosset sidder en bonde på hug bag en hest og holder sin flettede kurv frem, klar til at samle hestepærer. Desværre er hestepærer ikke figurer, en rimelig åbenlys påmindelse om, at tilsyneladende simple ting ikke altid er, hvad de ligner. Men simplicitet gør sin egen vigtighed til skamme. Scenen resonerer i særlig grad nu, i denne uophørligt billedmættede, digitale æra, hvor vi scroller ned gennem kuraterede virkeligheder, forfalskede sandheder og misinformation forklædt som fakta. Ordsprogets relevans skærpes, når det bliver et postulat om ydre fremtræden og en invitation til skepsis, et lille skub hen mod den usikkerhed, der ligger i enhver kritisk opfattelse. Kurven, hans, vores, er tom, men vi rækker den alligevel frem som for at bevise, hvordan håbet endnu ikke er kollapset under desillusioneringens vægt. Dette rejser et interessant spørgsmål: Hvordan kommer overflod til at indvirke på kommende verdensopfattelser? Vil det blotte omfang og fragmenteringen af kilder fordreje videnskabelige rekonstruktioner, så det bliver sværere at lave sammenhængende narrativer om vores tid og fortid?

Bengtsson undersøger og efterprøver netop det spørgsmål i sit arbejde. Hans værker adresserer hullerne i vores fatteevne og inviterer til refleksion over, hvordan nutiden og fremtiden kan bygge en slags broer mellem disse huller. I takt med,

at fejlmarginen udvider sig, skabes der mere rum for fantasi og historiefortælling, hvilket muliggør, at nogen kan science fictionalisere gennem fabulerende motiver, der samtidig er stilistisk rodfestede i en pseudohistorisk ramme. Subtilt ved gennemsyrer Bengtssons arbejde, hvilket også kommer til udtryk i udstillingstitlen. Værkerne bliver en slags skarpe og legende illustrationer af den såkaldte siluriske hypotese, et tankeeksperiment, der spørger, om spor efter en avanceret civilisation millioner af år før menneskeheden stadig ville kunne opdages. Gennem spekulationer og rekonstruktioner af alternative fortider konfronteres beskueren med groteske, med ubegribelige hybridvæsner og fantasifoster, der overskridt grænsen mellem det absurde og det uforklarlige. Fortid bliver fremtid og vice versa.

Arketyptiske billeder dukker op: den stoiske soldat, den arbejdssomme bonde, grisen (Danmarks mest forædlede kreatur), alle er de omformet til at være subjekter i et spekulativt narrativ, hvor der mellem empiriske data og teoretiske gisninger opstår en fantasitærskel. De halvt foldede voksgrise er malet, så de mimer snørklet trætekstur og antyder en bevidst fejlmargin, en databetinget intervention, en forvrængning opstået gennem videnskabens fejlforklaringer af fortiden, og nu igen filtreret gennem en spekulativ nutids smadrede linse. Disse objekter præsenterer sig selv som skulpturelle, de eksisterer ikke som statiske relikvier, men som fragmenterede ekkoer af en historie, der aldrig eksisterede – og inviterer os i stedet til at undersøge den skrobelige krydsning mellem rekonstruktion, fiktion og tro.

Det store fattigmandsvægtæppe – der mimer en gobelin – mægtigt og tungt i sin indviklethed, forestiller et landbrugstableau, der både er grotesk og intenst, et billede af forfald maskeret som slid. Gobeliner var et vigtigt element i 1600-tallets europeiske retssale og afbildede ofte overdådige historiske og mytologiske situationer. Denne tradition vandt fornyet indpas, da Bjørn Nørgaard blev kommissioneret til at skabe 17 gobeliner til dronning Margrethe II. Gobelinerne bestod primært af Danmarkshistoriske nøglebegivenheder, mens det syttende billede præsenterede en vision om en forestillet fremtid. I Bengtssons store vægtæppe buler bondens torso ud foran, et kålhoved fyldt af blodårer erstatter maven, og gennemsigtigheden har både noget vegetabilsk og noget foruroligende menneskeligt over sig. En fed gnaver breder sig ud over et leje af græskar, trækker sin tætte, muskuløse hale hen over afhuggede hænder; hænder, der griber om en enkeltfuret træplov. Denne plov, arkaisk og forvitret, næsten ceremoniel, forankrer værket, og dens tilstedevarelse er lige så faretruende, som den er utilitaristisk. Rækker af dyrehoveder skaber en visuel rytmе i billedet og flyder også ud i abstraktion. Der er noget skyggeteateragtigt over deres fremtoning, men funktionelt føles de mørkere, som en påmindelse om, hvad silhuetter kan skjule: Ingen kommer spørgsmålet om fejl og afvigelser i spil, at manipulere med det synlige er at manipulere med selve sansningen. Dette billede er ikke blot et rustikt idyllisk scenario,

det er ikke en høstfeiring. Grisene og deres anatomি, der i så urovækkende grad minder om vores, sidder i en skeletlignende stålträdsform. Bøndernes ben er helt udmagrede, forvredne, reduceret til funktion snarere end form som et ekko af denne stålträdkonstruktion, de har både et mekanisk og et menneskeligt formål. Vægtæppet indfanger beskueren i maskineriets uundgåelighed, et landskab, der også fordobler sig som en anatomic, en historie om arbejde og forbrug, hvor altting – kål, rotter, grise og mennesker – er foldet ind i samme groteske cyklus og narrativ. At betragte det er at komme i tanker om, at repetition ikke er lig med rytmе, og at lighed ikke er det samme som noget forenet.

Bengtssons frise indkapsler en tid, der både føles ældgammel og skrämmende nærværende, et rødpigmenteret tableau af ukendte efterspil, hvor døde soldaters kroppe er dynget sammen, deres lemmer er hugget af, og deres vægløshed blander sig ind i de kister, der omgiver dem. Fossiler af ubestemmelige arter ligger spredt mellem dem og tilbyder ingen svar, kun flere spørgsmål. Det er et billede, der hverken befinner sig her eller der, aflejringer af kollapsede epoker, en fjern, forestillet fortid kolliderer med en ukendt fremtid, og et sted midtimellem forsøger vi, beskuerne, at stykke det hele sammen. Ursula K. Le Guin har på et tidspunkt skrevet, at "science fiction is often described, and even defined, as extrapolative. The science fiction writer is supposed to take a trend or phenomenon of the here-and-now, purify and intensify it for dramatic effect, and extend it into the future".³ Men denne frise lader til at spørge om det omvendte: Hvad hvis denne proces fungerer i den modsatte retning? Hvad hvis fortiden, uvirkeligt, spekulativ og forestillet, faktisk reflekterer nutiden? Den består af motiver i flertal: af udkämpede og glemte krige, liv foldet ind i historien, æraer, der både går forud for os og vil komme efter os.

Hestepærer er ikke figurer; fejlmarginer baner vejen for nye fortolkninger og modsandheder. Og det er inden for rammerne af disse fejl, disse øjeblikke af rekalibrering, at fantasien slår rod og rækker ud efter metaforer, der redefinerer vores verdensopsfattelse.

1. Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Left Hand of Darkness* (New York: Ace Books, 1969), p.1

2. Gary Lanziti, *Writing History in Renaissance Italy: Leonardo Bruni and the Uses of the Past* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), pp. 7-15.

3. Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Left Hand of Darkness* (New York: Ace Books, 1969), p. 1.



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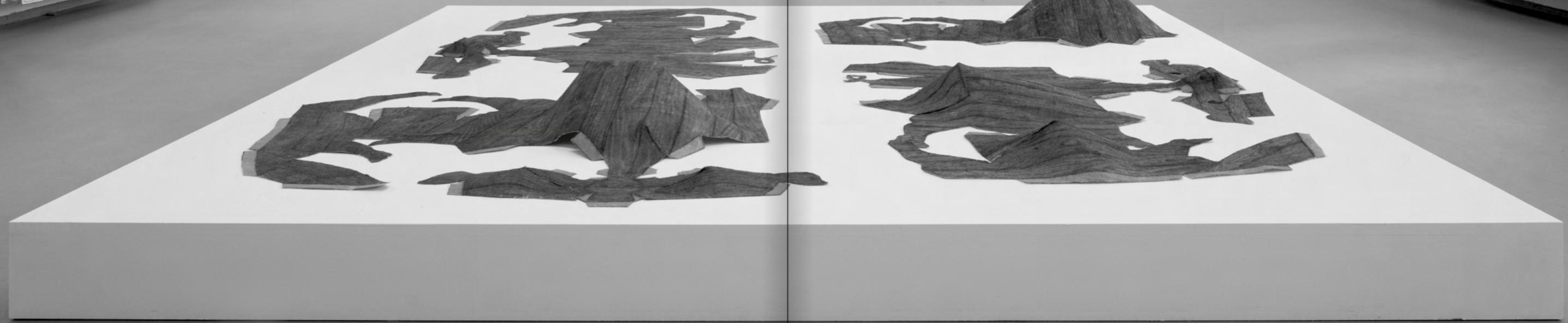
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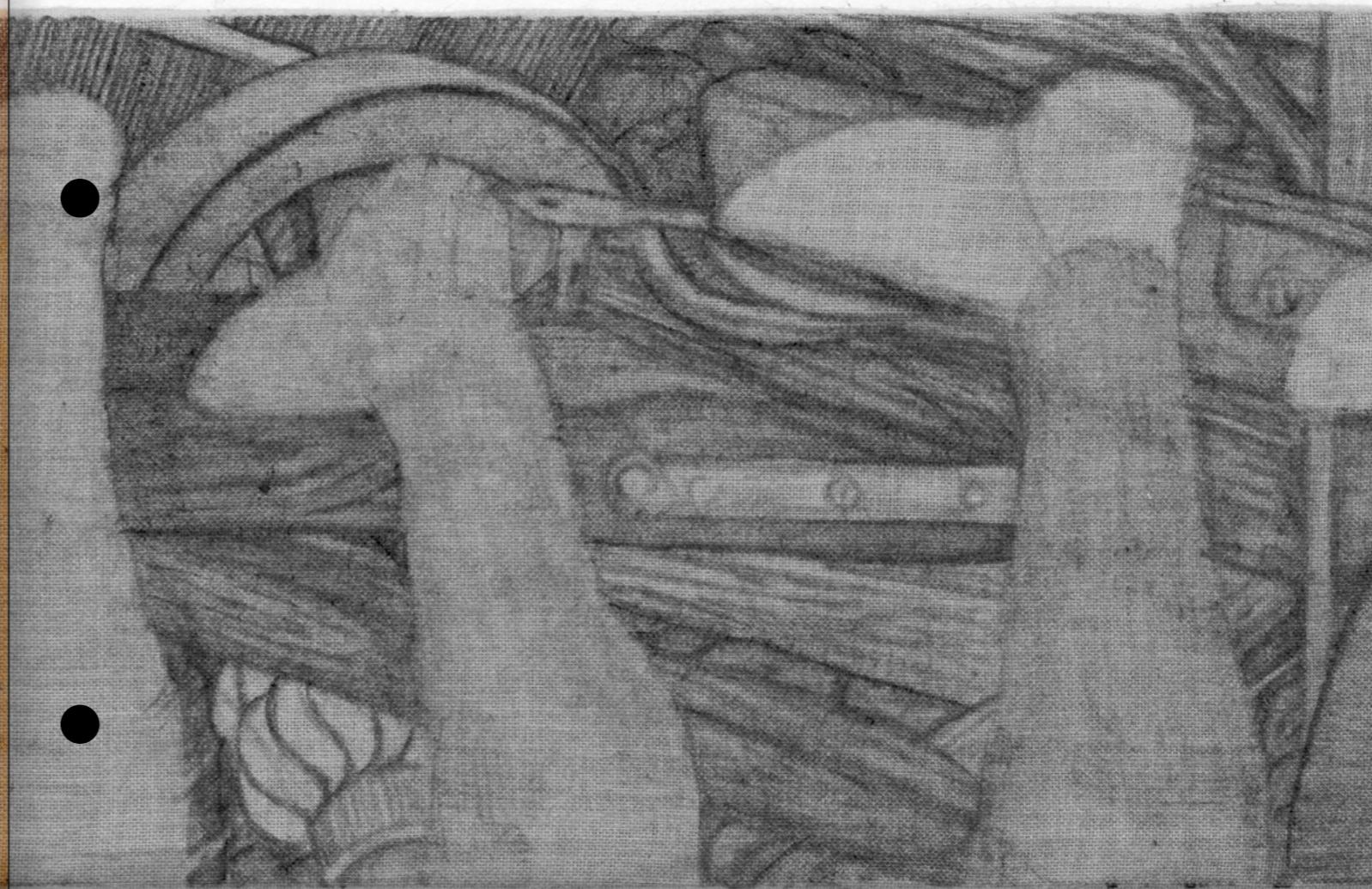


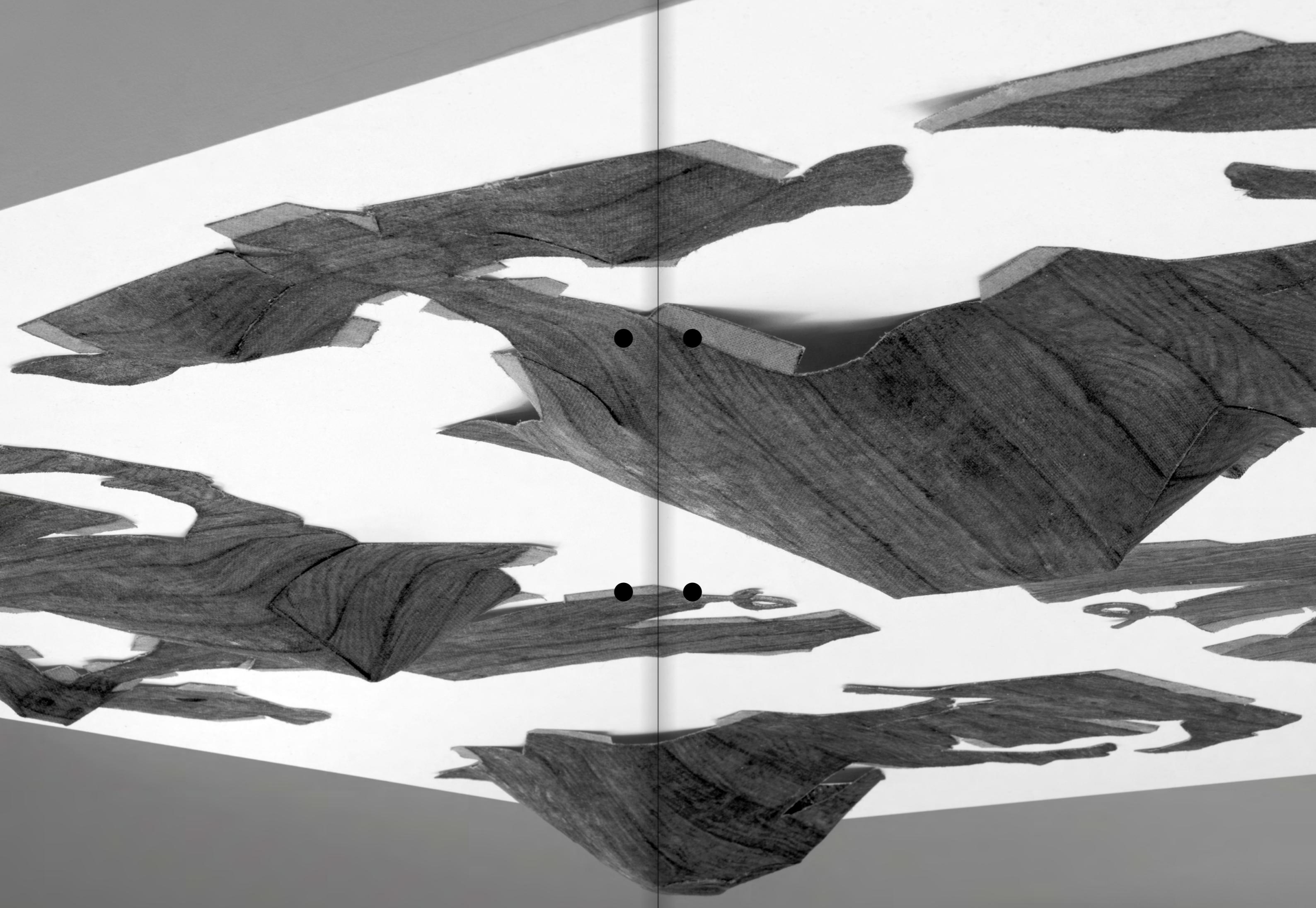














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TROJAN PIGS

Olivia Turnc

and on FaceTime when he was walking the streets of New York and I was wrapped in blankets, chain smoking on a balcony in Copenhagen. We discussed the widening margin of error, that "no man's land" between science and speculation, where facts get slippery and myths dress up as truth.

All inevitably came up (it always does), but we both agreed that it was overdone. Instagram reels of Elon Musk and Greta Thunberg making out or monkeys dressed in tuxedos blowing up balloons and deepfala all epitomize the noise filling this gap, but none of it would make it into this essay. No, this was going to be about something messier, something more real or unreal, depending on how you look at it.

curated realities, doctored truths, and misinformation masquerading as fact. The proverb's relevance grows as an axiom about appearances and an invitation to critical perception. The basket, his, ours, is empty, yet we extend it anyway as if to prove that hope has not collapsed under the weight of disillusionment. This raises an intriguing question: How will this abundance shape future perceptions of our contemporary world? Will the sheer volume and fragmentation of source distort scientific reconstructions, making it harder to form coherent narratives about our time and past? His work addresses the voids left in our understanding and invites reflection on how these gaps might be bridged in the present and future. As the margin of error expands, it creates more space for imagination and storytelling, allowing the present to be science-fictionized through fabulated motifs, all while being syllistically rooted in a pseudo-historical framework with permutations Benét's own. A subtle extension of years could still be detected. By speculating on what constitutes civilization predating humans by millions of years, the writer is confronted with the absurd and the uncanny. The past becomes the future and vice versa that straddles the line between the two.

of pumpkins, drags its dense, muscular tail across dismembered hands; the hands grasp the wooden poll of a single-furrow plow. This plow, archaic, weathered almost completely, anchors the piece, its presence as ominous as it is utilitarian. Rows of animal heads shape the visual rhythm of the piece, blurrered into abstract caricature. Their function feels like something dark, a reminder of what silhouettes obscure: once again, the question of the visible error comes into play: the manipulation of the manipulation of perception. This is no mere pastiche, no celebration of harvest. The pigs, with their emaciated, contorted, and reduced to a function rather than a form, echoing this wireframe structure, their purpose as much mechanical as human. The tapestry traps the viewer in the inevitability of its machinery, a landscape that doubles as anatomy, a story of labor rats, pigs, and men—has been folded into the same and consumption where everything—cabbaiges, rascimbance is not unity.

The trice captures a moment that feels both ancient and eternally present; a red-pigmented tableau of unknown africamat, where the bodies of soldiers are heaped together, their limbs dismembered, their weightless forms almost blending into the caskets that surround them.

Ace Books, 1969), p.1.
3. Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Left Hand of Darkness* (New York:

Past colliding with an unknowable future, and somewhere in between, us, observers trying to piece it all together; Ursula K. Le Guin once wrote: "Science fiction is often described, and even defined, as extrapolative. The science fiction writer is supposed to take a trend or phenomenon of the here-and-now, and extrapolate it into the future." But this freeze seems to ask: What if that process works in reverse? What if the past, unreal, speculative, and imagined, reflects the present lives folded into history, and erases both precede the way to new interpretations and counter-truths. It is within these errors, these moments of recalibration, that the imagination takes root, stretching itself toward metaphors that redefine our understanding of the world.

APPENDIX

"Any form of desire eats itself" is my bathroom mantra. But this statement eventually leads to a holt. The inside time, the hydratam, kale becomes a baby, a strawberry becomes, becomes soil, just like the assimilation of death and becoming a star, the summary of a thimble, history as a foot stand for disruption, although recently a few dormant sleeping places popped. The shockwave dismantled any further construction. The sleepers turning in their beds. They didn't find their synapses, the self-consuming music. The immaterial manifold station. Quickly after discovery, the finding was debunked as nothing less than a chamber pot from the late 1600s.

Now I know the best and the worst parts of it never having happened. Except for images coming out of nowhere, the bright future. Shapes confuse me. The body is a great invention. I believe in sides. The sediment is a body, at times exceeding myself another speck of dust to the pile of dust.

Tough times become calluses that alienate touch, making rigidly purposeless. Too much ease is self-accommodation, picks at its own navel until there's a direct link. Slowly the body is no longer body. The drain pipe in my old apartment burst a month after I left.

The drain pipe in my old apartment burst a month ago. The little hole is automatically filled, every hole is an asset. It's moldy and smells rankid and that's civilization. I imagine the cheese to be dehydrated by now, and rather than a lack of them.

Through the veneer of exhaustion, shimmering woven into it. The never-ending deposition transforms is irrevocable, information too. Even when animation is from the retrospective point of view as well. This seems to be a pattern that permeates the entirety of the inversion of objects into pillars.

I tried dusting off, keep my nose from inhaling. A pattern of avoidance has found its form; it works through extrapolation. The rust pieces off, but this time I know what to expect from the layer beneath. Squares and other shapes fill backyards. Underneath pools. I'm sure there are other things from past civilizations and innovations there yet. Filtering the life out of milk, and the innovations themselves. Filtering itself through civilization's greatest accomplishments. I think about the first cheese in the context of

The winter landscape with a bird trap. I'm still not sure about the taste. Sugar sprinkles, skinned, it's totally toxic. When I first attempted ingestion of the stomach joining in. I hear the horns of traffic playing, my chewing pressing against the wall of a suburban environment, alongside the reality that was unfolding at my feet. two, an implosion of my goodwill started breaching sure about the taste. Sugar sprinkles, skinned, it's

The utility useless desk with important things that streamlining, an appraising life, a pacification. Not long after I flicked the switch on, it highlights the crumbs lining my slippers. Were they really that dirty? Also my tools, the tools, the fixation on creation, on for conkers, and yet, I still don't understand the letters. are never picked up again. I have to trace crop circles back to their agricultural origin. A deep compassion for conkers, and yet, I still don't understand the letters.

The work is done in darkness. I go automatic; one block is aligned with another. It takes a while to adjust. Not long after I flicked the switch on, it highlights the assimilation of death and becoming a star, the summary of a thimble, history as a foot stand for disruption, although recently a few dormant sleeping places popped. The shockwave dismantled any further construction. The sleepers turning in their beds. They didn't find their synapses, the self-consuming music. The body is a great invention. I believe in sides. The sediment is a body, at times exceeding myself another speck of dust to the pile of dust.

To create a language without bones. To acknowledge their brittle and short-term function. That's why I'm too many, too little cooking time. Plastic. The boneless trajectory is an imitative toy. To create a language without bones. To acknowledge our mindings, for better or worse. Loops and circulation. Let me breathe here for a second.

I look at the cup with a want, bound up by the urge to be filled. I stuff both with tissue to begin with. I overflow, my hole collapses, creating another void to ingest as much as I can before it dissipates, before I dissipate. When that last drop of water makes it overflow, my hole collapses, creating another void to be filled. I stuff both with tissue to begin with.

Some are in ritual positions, laid out to be found in their own time. These oddities, their habits. The way a grain of sand is molded by water. There's much to discuss and loads to interpret; swept under the rug I cannot tell if we're the same.

I look down at a dug-out square on a mound of brown, tightly packed soil. Then again, these cardboard boxes that live been carrying lacey are short term. I am no longer able to distinguish whether the species that I look at had plans for effect, whether they ate rats, or how their bones were decorated with metal.

Like the logic behind setting in the northen hemisphere is having something to stand on, to cherish, it was what was left. Standing up to greet the hemispheres. The underround packs a punch.

The inventor must have insisted that the threads connecting between gray, a basket for berries, and the cloth, that the gap between each twice was a looping over each other were reason enough to keep the cloth, squeezing the last liquid out. Filtering the life out of practicality with a bluish line down the middle.

A pattern of avoidance has found its form; it works through extrapolation. The rust pieces off, but this time I know what to expect from the layer beneath. Squares and other shapes fill backyards. Underneath pools. I'm sure there are other things from past civilizations and innovations there yet. Filtering the life out of milk, and the innovations themselves. Filtering itself through civilization's greatest accomplishments.

The culinary wonder of the world. I imagine a cheese

out of practicality with a bluish line down the middle.

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an "image vessel" (*Bildgefäß*) as a part of his theory on cultural memory, investigating how certain visual culture of Antiquity, across time and geography visual formulas and types have survived since the image. The culminating was his never finished *Bilderrätsel* (*Mincosityne* (memory riddles) whose anachronistic juxtapositions of artworks and pop-cultural phenomena maps out visual archetypes and their journey through history on 62 dark, textile-clad boards been labeled as a primitive forerunner of Google's.

which juxtaposes seemingly randomly random material in image atlas is, also a part of an era's endeavors to construct what Benétsson does not do when he points to how search results. But Warburg's memory atlas was, as a really been dragged out from the depths of gaping knowledge holes, necessarily being more closely related to the dragons of fantasy literature than we immediately thought.

Victor Benétsson's works present themselves as unpolished and chaotic visions. The paint has been rubbed into coarse sackcloth. In many places the weaving is bare. I want to touch it with the tips of my fingers, scratching myself a bit on the fibers. Over time a crude material will gradually rot, so it is uncertain that a distant future will get the chance to experience Benétsson's work. But should the Earth be struck by a meteor and fall into a deep sleep like Sleeping Beauty, might our droppings cause similarity mad amiations and deliriums in a distant future? We do not know because even though we exist now, the history about us does not.

The fossil and the artwork alike are important drivers in the stories we tell about ourselves and the world, which over time become ingrained in our consciousness—but which perceptions and on what premises? These are the questions Victor Bengtsson asks us, and the future, when he lets seemingly other in his bizarre image chains. A couple of days after I first saw these works in person, I thought the sleeking suits traps in the thorned branches evoked these associations to sleepwalkerish, rather comicidencies, too. Not that Bengtsson's coarse canvases and slightly icky, disturbing irony looks like Burmese-jewels, kitsch and porcelain-like fairytale figures, whereas Burmese-jewels, knight-like fantasies are painted both refer to a European art historical tradition. But forth with a sensibility shaped by his era's refined decorative efforts (especially constituted by his long-term collaboration with William Morris workshop) Bengtsson is rough and fun. And it is not adorable anymore vines that connect his pictorial elements; it is elements in the shape of stylized plants and shapes, and allowing them to tangle up with the fibers of the rope and skeleton parts radiating the fragments together canvases. Whereas Burmese-jewels incorporates decorative elements in the shape of stylized plants and shapes, a slightly more recent Danish exponent for the Burmese-jewels' variations on the Middle Ages and early Renaissance plasters his canvas with stenciled hand signs.

On the large canvas hanging in the middle of one of the gallery spaces, rippled up fish are hung to dry and monstrous vegetables shoot from the ground. Strange, pig-like shapes hover above the scenario, blending in with the sight of a grotesque blow making its way through the landscape. In Benignossi's long freeze, hanging in the adjaacent gallery, hairy creatures tumble around among skeleton-like structures. Fallen fruits and vegetables commingle with disconcerted limbs in what mostly comes off as a messy battle scene and a harvest motif. Is it the hands of a Norm that we see by the spinning wheel? Are they spinning the destiny of those creatures colliding in and out of the motif, becoming ropes and chains that forcefully hold everythign together? Figures and fruits take root in the same soil as strange fossil fragments: bones and skeletons, the imprint of a wheel whose dominating shape is now made up of the raw materials sprouting then. It left us with the remains of extinct plant and animal species in the soil layers, which, over time, became the fossils that now and then appear at our present surface. Fossils are traces of remains of dead organisms, the result of a lengthy process where plants or animal skeletons leave their marks in the soil. Gradually, the organic material is replaced with surlounding minerals which then create a cast of the skeleton, or the cavities inside the bones are filled up with minerals, creating a new negative imprint.

What we look at when we look at fossils is thus a void between past and present, filled out by nature's raw

Ursula K. Le Guin defines fantasy and science fiction as the oldest, most universal forms of literature in her homage to the genre (and her colleague Jorge Luis Borges), "Things Not Actually Present" (2005). Opposed to how realistic literature is limited to universality recognizable motifs; "It seems to be a fact that everybody, everywhere, even if they haven't met one before, recognizes a dragon," she explains. Victor Bengtsson's works are not inhabitable by dragons but they do dig down into the layers of soil on which we have built our cultural identities, and they drag similar mythicical creatures out into a pictorial chaos of pigs in the mud while the celestial unicorn materializes in a magical whirl of gitter. In 1663 in Magdeburg, though, German scientist Otto von Guericke is thought to have found evidence for the actual existence of the unicorm. His finding of a woolly rhinoceros caused the to have found evidence for the actual existence of the unicorm. His finding of a woolly rhinoceros caused the though, German scientist Otto von Guericke is thought to have found evidence for the actual existence of the unicorm. His finding of a woolly rhinoceros caused the

History Does Not End Here

The German cultural anthropologist Abby Warburg broke with the idea of the linear story that had otherwise perverted art historical practices since Renaissance is the painter Einar Niclesen. Both cultivative and Burmese Joneses, it is because they both operate within a historical awareness and a set of cultural archetypes of which I sense a subtle echo in Benetton's work, while he also points a finger at it. A provoking conclusion is at play in his works, between the art historical references of the turbulent vein through Benetton's work (you recognize the narrative history painting) but as a matter of fact, the appears to primarily believe that history does not exist—in any case, not as we think we know it and especially not as a linear, coherent course.

A large, dark, thick, curved shape resembling a stylized 'C' or a crescent moon, positioned at the top of the page. The curve starts from the left edge, goes up and to the right, then down and to the right again, ending near the right edge. It has a smooth, continuous line.

What we look at when we look at fossils is thus a void between past and present, filled out by nature's raw materials, that creates some kind of mirroring of the original form.

The fossil offers us time in a physical shape, making it tangible to us. But as Otto von Guericke's unicorn testifies to, fossil reconstructions are complicated via comparisons with similar findings and profound knowledge about the anatomy of living animals. To a certain extent, the art historian operates in a similar way when looking up in the archives and are compelled to be laid out and placed in a historical continuum. And it is no coincidence that the art history discipline—finding its feet in the 19th century in parallel to the development of evolutionary theories and breakthroughs within the field of biology—applied to artworks² it was based on an idea that this method in *Philosophie de l'art* as a kind of "botany of art" historians from the field of biology. When French art historian Hippolyte Taine articulated sciences—utilized metaphors from the field of natural sciences and breakthroughs within the field of biology to articulate growth conditions.² Art, culture, and biology are eerily intertwined.

2. Hippolyte Taine, *Philosophie de l'art* (Paris: Hachette, 1893).

available at archive.org/details/philosophiedelar00taineuoft. mode/2up.

INTRODUCTION

Victor Bengtsson (b. 1997), DK is a self-taught artist with a BA Medicine (2019-23) who lives and works in Copenhagen. He has exhibited at venues including Mendes Wood São Paulo (2021; New York, 2022; Brussels, 2023); Public Gallery, London (2024); East Contemporary Gallery, Milan (2024); and Someda (2024).

Rheea Dall,
Director and Chief Curator, O-Ovrgaden,
February 2025

Meanwhile, Bentgissón's associative motifs continue in a broken freeze of paintings puzzling together dormant, or simply dead, human figures or up-side-down, distorted bodies—as if buried or submerged. In Bentgissón's mythologized narratives, designed as historical waves, apocalyptic scenarios repeat. As such, these shadow motifs and their distorted depictions mixing historical farming and fishing culture corrupt the idea of a true history, hinting at how pseudoscientific narratives still lurk behind our perception of reality today.

The grand-scale painting is overlaid with a belt of a repainted blue animal motif with a bright star at its center. A dark emblem—based on the simplified coat of arms of a goat-hand-gesture—hunting at US Pop art, while it underscores Brueghel's tongue-in-cheek or rebellious dyed takeover of historic tapestry. In another series, several pigs are cut out, DIY origami style, from painted canvases. Wonky and imprecise in their remake, the pigs or translations never get it quite right, destabilizing the exhibition title *Horse droppings are not farts*, a Dutch proverb about how to not be fooled by appearances; don't mistake "horse apples" for the big tree's sweet taste, brown fruit.

In the mindscet of this awry archaeological digging, the motifs' soft colors of cadmium red/purple and cobalt blues, ochre unfold a world gone wrong; a rural harvest in a surreal tumultuous assembling over-sized vegetableables, an awry plow clad in tiles, burning houses, a giant lishhook, dissected carps, and pigs turned trap nets.

For O-Overgaarden, Beengssønn has created a new series of works, including a grand 6-meter-wide painting, hung unstrretched and heavy. The artist's particular technique is based on rubbing color onto canvas—also called jute canvas—imprisoning motifs into the rough structure of the fabric. Leaving the threads visible, the free-hanging colored textile alludes to historical weavings—a kind of poor man's Gobelin. Mimicking the grand storytelling of traditional tapestries, this piece is an epic depiction of rural life in Northern Europe, as if (mis)understood from a distant future, creating a historicalization that is more fabulation than fact.

EAN: 9788794311250

Horse droppings are not figs
Victor Bengtsson
Exhibition period: 22.02.2025 – 04.05.2025

O-VERGADEN
Overgaden neden Vandet 17, 1414 København K,
overgaden.org

A close-up, high-angle view of a person's face, focusing on the eyes and forehead. The person has dark hair styled in a bun and is wearing a dark, textured garment. The background is a warm, earthy tone.

