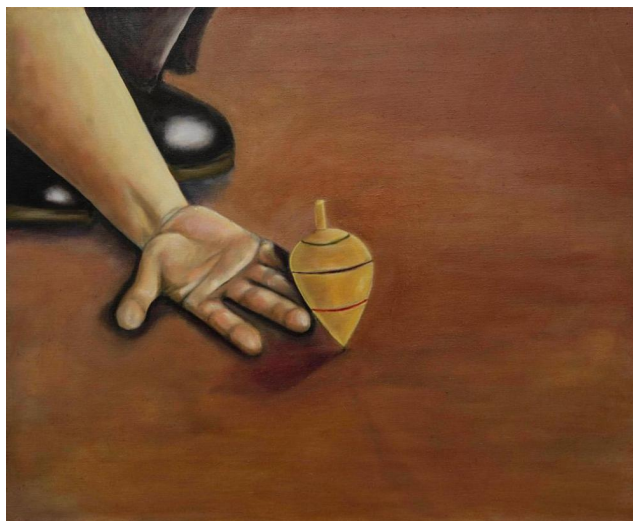


Eight Lives (Troubadouring Summerworks)

July 19–29, 2022

The Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts
323 West 39th Street, NY, NY 10018

Viktoria Wendel Skousen
Benjamin Savi
Katinka Mann
Rebecca Krasnik
Raque Ford
Rhona Bitner
Stefan Bakman
Fanny Allié



Curated by Mai Dengsøe

Eight Lives (Troubadouring Summerworks) is an exhibition that deals with time, figurative circulation, and intergenerational perspectives on intimacy and storytelling. The exhibition features works by eight EFA and Art Hub Copenhagen artists. The exhibition takes place in the half-open office space of EFA. A room where people come and go, sit and talk, meet in the kitchen, grab a snack, or enter to leave a message. There is a constant transit of artists, cultural workers, visitors, and colleagues—all connected and passersby at the same time.

All eight artists have printmaking in common, yet the work exhibited in the current show spans a diverse mix of materials and media. From plexiglass, photography, painted aluminum, oil painting, paper works, and textiles; the techniques and methods used by the artist may echo the field of printmaking, by the use of drawing, letters, figuration, and repetition, though the outcome creates a plurality of direction, visual expression, and meaning.

On the architectural and uneven wall closest to the entrance door, the ongoing and serial photographic work by **Viktoria Wendel Skousen** (1985) is shown. The work is a continuous reflection on the precarious and sometimes lonely life of an artist. Skousen's methodological approach never shows the actual body of the camera-holder, but turns towards the intimacy of their surroundings. The work deals with the interior of the impersonal. In the hotel-looking residencies depicted, the gaze constitutes itself as both object and subject. In gray, blue, purple and slight yellow colors *traveling to work working while traveling to get paid an artist in residency*

Image: Benjamin Savi, *SPINNER*, 2022. Photo: Jonas Handskemager

distillates complex emotional tempers and excitement of the romantic, nostalgic and repetitive life, encapsulating eroticism and boredom in the same shot.

What looked artificial to me, are depictions of forms drawn from nature, explained by the artist herself. **Katinka Mann** (1925) is a New York-based artist, who since the beginning of her career has been working intensively with the perception of light and space. Her series of painting sculptures exhibited here is no exception. Starting out as a landscape painter Mann early on decided to switch to other media, capturing nature through less traditional materials. This eventually led to new and more abstract expressions. Mann's early work with printmaking, photography and wood shares its visual expression with her aluminum and spray-painted serial works. It was through printmaking that Mann began exploring geometric forms that, in her later work, coexist with more organic lines as seen in the two works on display; *Shine It Cool*, 2022 and *Celebration* 2021. Mann's work contains impressionistic qualities in the way that from afar the surfaces look calm, strong and opaque, whereas from a closer look they shimmer and flicker. Creating shadows on the wall, Mann's work consists of transparent and intangible dimensions, bringing forth awareness of spatial relationships.

Raque Ford (1986) works with found text, plexiglass and mixed materials in a poetic, semi-figurative and sculptural language. Her fresh and composite use of intertextuality, art historical references, and found objects balanced with diary notes, laser-cut letters, hearts and flowers, creates a distinct layeredness and lively style. The color combination and the play with transparency and opacity make a strong visual expression activating the viewer's sensory apparatus.

Ford's work deals with fragility, sensibility, love and friendship. Her work often combines art historical subjects with mainstream metaphors and symbols drawn from pop culture. Hence *Hollywood Cemetery Sign* 2022 and *How to misinterpret a sentence* 2022 reflect a cheerful attitude still with hints of criticality or gravity. In re-using the cut-out letters, so characteristically for her practice, Ford is both working with the positive and negative space, when creating images. The typefaces she uses in her letter-based work bear connotation to a 70s hippie style, echoing happiness and free spirit, though being more rooted in contemporary discourses. Ford's exploration of surfaces and compound materiality makes her work profoundly lyrical—ghostly mimicking—the literal content of the work. Mixing narrativity with her many-layered, material-oriented, and energetic work, Ford's practice opens up new understandings of cultural heritage, collectivity and care.

Cats have nine lives but have feelings too! **Benjamin Savi** (1992) has depicted the exact situation where the cat's tail gets trampled on by a malicious or just careless passerby in high and heavy heels. The electricity of the emotion depicted, making the cat's fur bristle, is both a classical trick in art history - to portray the moment of horror (*The Laocoon Group* being the most known example), and typical for Savi whose interest revolves around psychological aspects of dislocations of both the digital and streetlife. The work of Savi includes painting, drawing, and graphics - in this exhibit arranged together as a total installation or a mind map. His method varies in terms of mood, motive and technique. While some of the work on display took several months to paint, others were made in a day. Savi's works feature stylistic and historical references to the chosen medium, while his motifs are usually rooted in the contemporary world. Capturing urban

imagery, through a humorous and emphatic lens, Savi has been exploring interactions between human beings, animals, and architecture.

In her figurative panels, **Fanny Allié** (1981) draws on fragmented narratives picked from theater and dance. Allié's work consists primarily of textiles and used materials. With an interest in clothing and costumes, some of her work connotes dress-up dolls and puppet theaters. In her own words, Allié works with "abandoned material". By this phrase, Allié reformulates the positive term 'found objects', a method used throughout art history, and put forward a more critical terminology when describing her poetic and sensitive artistic research. The term 'abandoned material' makes one think of the current climate crisis and piles of trash and plastic present everywhere, as well as homelessness, a theme she has addressed in other works. Allié works between figuration and abstraction, and her work bears similarities with Danish arts and craft tradition, notably the painter and ceramic artist Kirsten Christensen, who in her reliefs addressed themes of sickness, pollution and the abandoned. Allié's four panels work to share a visual kinship with plates found in old botanical books. The textile has a certain paper-like quality while the arrangement of the figures and motifs is placed upon it in a sober yet narratively incoherent way.

Allié's work corresponds to some extent to the composition and motifs seen in the work of **Stefan Bakman** (1988). Bakman's graphic work is informed by the conception of images found in the late art historian Aby Warburg's *Mnemosyne Atlas*. It follows no order, no chronology. Instead, the work is driven forward by a mechanism of association, in tracing psychological and visual re-appearings. This interest—in a Warburgian terminology: *Nachleben*—concerns the afterlives of images. Bakman's works are sensitive, precarious and fragile. His portrayals of an inner life span abstraction and figuration. This eclectic approach and the way in which he literally draws pictures from old books on psychology and mixes drawings from family albums generates his own personal iconography, being part of an extensive artistic research trying to grasp the human condition by carving into the imagery of both art and cultural history.

While Van Gogh focused on the ontology of the farmer's shoes, **Rhona Bitner** presents a hyper-focused image of a worn-out pointe shoe. Her photographic work is a crystallization of a long story of pain and beauty. Placed in the same room as Rebecca Krasnik, their work is in dialogue and expresses both an intergenerational agreement and shift. As opposed to Roland Barthes who in his book *Camera Lucida* describes the ontology of the photographs through looking at people, and "them, having been exactly there", Bitner, is more interested in the materialistic history, capturing objects, as symptoms. Her feminist approach is both critical, intriguing and caring. A ballerina needs two pairs of shoes for each ballet danced. Bitner has collected piles of them, and some are being shown in the exhibition to reveal the more research-based part of Bitner's practice. In high-resolution, with the monochrome and black background, the shoes appear like a huge surrealist object. A potato with fluffy hair. What so charismatically constitutes the beauty of the ballerina is now being exposed in a totally opposite way. Bitner's work is mythical in its own way but still forces us to rethink the fairy tales and rewrite reality.

At EFA **Rebecca Krasnik** (1987) is showing a new photographic work that is part of a bigger artistic research project focusing on hands and gestures. Krasnik's work examines the images we surround ourselves with and how the world is represented in them. Her work spans photography,

prints, text and artist books. Additionally, Krasnik has done several curatorial projects such as *Lazed Leaves*, which places works of art in relaxed positions on sofas in people's homes. In the work exhibited, the lens has zoomed in on two bound marble carved hands. The contrast between the sculptural interest, with the sharp focus on the sculpture's support system between each finger, to stabilize the hand, stands in great contrast to the way the photograph itself is taken. Having found the sculpture in the collection of Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek in Copenhagen, Krasnik's focus on hands only, symptomatically makes the image background irrelevant. This clear contrast creates a photographic instability and shows the fragility of the "objective gaze".

The troubadour was a composer and performer of lyric and poetry in the High Middle Ages (1100-1350) who traveled around with their performing arts. Troubaduring is a neologism made to celebrate the post-pandemic opportunity to travel abroad and get to exchange ideas, meet new people and breathe in new air once again. The troubadour was very dependent on meeting in real life, hence the nature of their performing arts. Sculpture, painting, prints and so forth, are just as dependent on being exhibited and looked at IRL amid their static nature, and not only living a one-dimensional life behind screens.

Summerworks is a month-long residency for four artists and one curator from Denmark supported by Art Hub Copenhagen and the Bikuben Foundation New York. The four Danish artists were selected by a jury consisting of Mats Stjernstedt, Director of Malmö Kunsthall, and Anne-Mette Schultz, artist, and former Summerworks resident. The EFA artists were selected by resident curator Mai Dengsøe and Studio Program Manager Deric Carner.

Mai Dengsøe studied art history at the University of Copenhagen and Humboldt-Universität in Berlin. Currently, she works as a curator at Kunsthall Rønnebæksholm. For several years she lived in the countryside of Denmark working both at Kunsthall44Møen and with german artist Ursula Reuter Christiansen, building a rare bridge between generations. Dengsøe's style, approach, and interest constitute a rare eclectic approach that is at ease with the coexistence of fiction and artmaking along with theory and curating. From 2018-20, she was assistant to Ursula Reuter Christiansen and most recently, she authored the first monograph on the visual artist entitled: *Poppies Mutate into Bats: A 60-year Expanse of Paintings*. Together with the visual artists Magnus Andersen and Louis Scherfig, she runs the curatorial research collective and exhibition space Bizarro in Copenhagen. Dengsøe has worked with curation since 2016 and published articles in magazines such as Periskop, Ny Jord and AWARE Archives of Women Artists, Research and Exhibitions.