

Svend Danielsen
Under linjen

25.08 – 21.10 2018



CV

Svend Danielsen (b.1955) studied at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in the period 1974-78. He has since exhibited in solo and group exhibitions in Denmark and abroad and is represented in the collections of the National Gallery of Denmark and Hygum Art Museum. Since 2013 he has been one of the artists behind the artist-run exhibition space Svends Bibliotek (Svend's Library) in Copenhagen, and has also published a wide range of artist books.

EVENTS

Thursday 13 September 6-7.30pm

CONVERSATION: *WHAT TO DO ABOUT PAINTING?*

In connection with the exhibition, Overgaden invites you to an evening dedicated to painting as an artistic expression. Despite the fact that no other medium has been declared dead as often as painting it keeps coming back more or less renewed decade after decade. But why is painting so compelling? The artists Claus Carstensen, Martin Aagaard Hansen and Svend Danielsen will present their answers to this question in a joint conversation. The event will be in Danish.

Friday 12 October 7-8pm

CULTURE NIGHT 2018: *DET INDRE GELÆNDER*

On the occasion of Culture Night 2018, Svend Danielsen and a handful of his artist colleagues will, under the name Det indre gelænder, perform an improvised concert that investigates sound and sound-producing objects using a variety of alternative instruments.

THANK YOU

Svend Danielsen would like to thank Lone Arendal, Peter Stuhr, Søren Ankarfeldt, Niels Plenge, Lis Nogel, Jørgen Teik Hansen, Torben Danielsen, Magnus Frederik Clausen, Toke Martins, Anders Sune Berg, and Overgaden.

This exhibition folder can be downloaded from: overgaden.org

The exhibition is supported by:



DANISH ARTS FOUNDATION

Overgaden is supported by the Danish Arts Foundation and the Obel Family Foundation

OVERGADEN.

Institute of Contemporary Art, Overgaden neden Vandet 17, 1414 Copenhagen K, Denmark, overgaden.org, +45 32577273

Design: Anni's

From the Toolshed to the Garden of Eden

By Magnus Frederik Clausen

The first time I saw the artist Svend Danielsen was in the early 1990s. I can vaguely remember his long, dark hair and lanky body as he traipsed along the street where my friend lived in the town of Fredensborg. I've encountered his works several times since, but not until 27 years after this memory did we actually meet in person, when we ended up talking about Fredensborg, art, Esrum Lake, paintings, and everything in between. That's a year ago, and now we're in his studio to talk about his art and his solo exhibition at Overgaden. In the window there's a small tinfoil sculpture, and Svend tells me that it was once a lunchbox. It's still shedding crumbs.

So what's the exhibition about Svend?

It's an exhibition of paintings, videos, drawings, and what I call object sculptures. Painting is still the headquarters I take my bearings from, but I still see the other elements as being on a par with painting. I'm especially interested in the dialogue that emerges between them. It's a conversation that underpins and challenges the paintings, and brings some breathing space to how I work.

Sometimes the painting seems to be looking for connections. Like the painting of Erich Erichsøe on the wall here in your studio. It talks to the water pipes next to it.

Yes – objects and paintings set each other free, and I want to open things up rather than box them in. Keeping the options open as a valid statement. The exhibition¹ you and Mads Lindberg made last year addressed some ideas I also find interesting. I often think the poor paintings look so lonely hanging in gallery exhibitions. I miss intimacy in the room. When I exhibit I try to create a space around the painting by including objects I find here and there. I might put a lamp up, or a piece of wood or something else, and you did exactly the same.

Can you say a bit more about the objects you work with?

This cardboard box was lying outside the local supermarket just looking at me. It looks like a fly with three eyes, or something from *Star Wars*. The material has certain proportions and dislocations that have a quality I can use. I'm always on the lookout for things that can be incorporated in my art. It's a bit like music: you have to be alert to jump into the rhythm and tone, or in this case jump into the colour and materiality. It's a mindset I have from music.

What role does music play in your art?

I'm not a musician, but I'm into music and also play in

an artist band. I'll never forget the first time I played notes on a guitar that the painter Peter Martensen ran through a distortion machine. Right there, right then, I sensed a free space that was missing in my art. I'm trained in the old school at the art academy, and if you woke me up in the middle of the night I could paint a portrait of my neighbour in my sleep. That's also fine, but you have to remember your breathing, remember your freedom, and music gave me a way back into painting. Can I show you a painting machine that's kind of related to that? It's an empty clementine box with holes in the bottom. It's a perfect fit for three brushes, and it blocks your view of what you're painting.

Some people might see something like that as an obstacle to painting – a barrier rather than a help.

It's an obstacle to visibility, but not to rhythm. It distorts the painting and each brush can take turns taking the lead. A kind of instrument with a keynote. It gives rhythm, but not control. There's a resistance that creates new possibilities, and not being able to see what you're painting can be a gift.

You also use paintings by other artists as a catalyst for your investigations. How does that work?

Take a work I've made based on a painting by Georges Rouault. The intention was to try something similar to him, but it went haywire. But the essence of what I experienced when I was painting it is in my memory, and has made its way into other paintings I've done since. When a painting starts like that, it never ends up looking like the original. It's about my ideas about another artist. I try to immerse myself in their art and I imagine all kinds of things, but it's all stuff I invent. Whether it ends up like the original isn't the point. It's a way of getting hold of the substance.

Is it a study in art history, where you immerse yourself in different periods and projects by different artists?

No, I'm driven by what I've seen and experienced. It's about perceiving the world with your senses and bringing that into the work. There's an Italian composer that's written a piece of music called *Il Giardino Religioso*. That's more like what I mean. Paradise is a too grandiose word, but there can be an afterglow at the same time as sensing and wondering. It's hard to explain.

In the book 'Jordbær' there's an interview with you, Lisbeth Bonde and Tal R, where Tal describes your works as being like something you might find in a shed without knowing what it was. It's fantastic finding some-

thing that you can't identify, but something must have happened since then, because a lot of your works no longer look like something you'd find in a shed. Are we on some kind of journey from the toolshed to the holy garden?

Something's definitely happened since then, but I'm sure you could find a junk sculpture in the holy garden. There has to be room for some fun, otherwise who'd want to be there? The painting is an open space, which at best can't be defined. There are stops and starts now and then that send me in new directions.

Can we talk about the more technical side of your paintings? How do you work?

My paintings often have different elements. I might paint a lake like this one (Svend points to a large painting that will be in the exhibition). It could be Esrum Lake, but that doesn't necessarily mean there's a field next to it like a traditional landscape. There are loose ends, different elements side by side on the same canvas. Next to the lake, for example, I've painted different colour combinations that come from studying the work of Svend Wiig Hansen, and elsewhere there's an area where the colours red and green meet. As I paint I usually make lots of notes and drawings in front of the painting I'm working on. It's a parallel activity, exploring different deviations and detours, and drawing makes me aware of things that improve how I place the brushstrokes.

So in this painting we have a memory of Esrum Lake, and from there we jump to an investigation of how red and green meet, we have a salute to Svend Wiig Hansen, then something else again that looks like a toppled Roman column. A collage of input?

Let's just call it different elements brought together in a single image that in the end somehow hang together visually. During the process the painting has been turned upside down and around repeatedly, so I could focus on the individual elements. Like looking at a map, where you get your bearings from the place you're standing. At the end the work coalesced facing the way it is now.

So the painting is literally explored from every conceivable angle?

A painting is an object, something I can twist and turn during the process. Turning it around gives me a new perspective on what I'm painting, and I notice other formal qualities in the work.

I have this sense that your paintings try to encapsulate all kinds of things, from a crack in the asphalt, to light in a window, to a dog in the back of a car. Your paintings include all these elements without spelling it out. You try to sneak up on yourself, so the elements you work with don't become too laboured. A bit like riding a bike. You want to turn right at the same time as you turn left – preferably without knowing the name of the road, even though you actually do know it. And you'd rather not think about how you cycle, because that would stop you focusing on what you're looking at on the road. But at the same time you know full well how a bike works, and that's why you've unscrewed the pedals.

There could be some truth to that. Like red and green meeting on the canvas. If you tried to explain that, it would be virtually impossible, but if you see it and experience it you don't question what it is. You might have an opinion, but it's something beyond words. What you want to paint might be fairly concrete, but you approach it sideways.

I've nothing left in my notes, apart from the image we talked about earlier – of moving from the toolshed to the sacred garden – so maybe this is a good place to stop?

Yes, that's a good image to close on.

Magnus Frederik Clausen is an artist.

Translation: Jane Rowley

1. 'Landscape Modern Oil Painting Canvas Painting Abstract Oil Painting Wall Hanging', 16.06 – 22.07 2017, Galleri Benoni, Copenhagen. Curated by JIR SANDEL.