

Anna Bjerger



Anna Bjerger

Drifters

Så fjernt, men dog så nært*

I første omgang tænker jeg på berøring. Men ikke et kærtegns blide berøring eller en hånds hårde greb om koldt metal. Det er en fingerspids og det allermindste møde, den kan have med en overflade, jeg tænker på. Et berøringspunkt så fint og lille, at det næppe kan afsløre noget om det berortes egenskaber. En hvisten til den verden af ting, der omgiver det: "Åh, du er her." Nu forestiller jeg mig det samme rum mellem penslen og metaloverfladen, som Anna Bjerger bruger som underlag for sine malerier, det lille tomrum fyldt med maling. Samtidig er jeg fængslet af afstande, en fornemmelse af en verden, der er beboet, fra et fjernt perspektiv; et liv bestående af billeder. Den virkelighed, som vi får adgang til gennem vores sanser, som aldrig holder op med at være der, og som udfolder sig i en overflod af forskellige egenskaber; hvordan kan denne verden forsvinde fra os, når den indhyller os i et kontinuum, som vi ikke har mulighed for at fjerne os fra? Alligevel glider den til tider så langt væk, at kroppen forsvinder, udslettet af fornemmelsen af at få adgang til vores egen virkelighed gennem en linse.

Anna Bjergers malerier eksisterer i et ustabilit rum mellem disse kontrasterende erfaringsskalaer. De berører livet tæt på, men som var det lavet af fjerne minder, billeder af 'et' liv, som, personligt og fremmed på en gang, flyder over og gennem os. Det er en velkendt følelse, for hvem har ikke oplevet en følelse af at leve sit eget liv, som om det foregik et andet sted? Faktisk har mange af de motiver, som Bjerger vælger at male, karakter af det, vi ser på, når vi tænker på noget andet: detaljen i en kropsholdning, buksers måde at folde sig over et par lædersko eller skyggers møde med en væg. Eller også er det hendes motiver, der vender sig bort fra os. Hendes værker er fyldt med figurer, der vender ryggen til beskueren, mens andre skjuler deres ansigter eller blot stirrer ud over rammen. Disse temae kan man relatere til, men de er samtidig udefinierbare og følelsesladede – de består lige så meget af folder, vrid og fravær som af håndgribeligt genkendelige scener. Vi må spørge os selv, om ledetrådene til at forstå disse billeder findes i det, der ligger frit til skue, eller om de snarere er placeret i deres vanskeligt definerbare omgivelser. Driller vores eksistens os ikke med lignende tvív!

Følelsen af distance i Bjergers malerier stammer til dels fra den fotografiske inspiration til hendes motiver. Hun finder sine motiver i et eksisterende billedmateriale hentet fra et visuelt arkiv af blade, kataloger og gamle bøger, som har hobet sig op i kunstnerens atelier gennem årene. Når hun arbejder på en ny værkgruppe, vender hun tilbage til dette kildemateriale igen og igen og bladrer ofte de samme sider igennem, indtil et billede, som hun måske har set hundreder af gange før, pludselig bliver relevant for hendes aktuelle overvejelser. De valg, hun træffer, når hun beslutter sig for at forvandle et bestemt billede frem for et andet til et maleri, og

den måde, hvorpå disse billeder så forholder sig til hinanden i en værkgruppe, er imidlertid uransagelige. Selv om der ligger en klar malerisk udfordring i mange af værkerne, overskygger deres gådefulde natur altid deres tendens til fingerfærdighed. "Der sker noget," siger Bjerger for at forklare, hvordan billederne bliver meningsfulde gennem denne langsomme, meditative visuelle forskning. Herefter skifter tempoet: de trykte kilder forvandles af hurtige, ekspressionistiske strøg med oliemaling, der påføres trods metaloverfladens modstand. Når flydende farvetårer får lov til at dryppe, er maleriet færdigt.

Den rumlige og tidslige spændvidde, som fotografiet tilfører disse værker, bunder i linsens logik, som opbygger en verden bestående af øjne og pander. I denne rationelle proces, hvor det synlige, som konstant oversvømmer os, blokeres til fordel for et enkelt synsindtryk, befinder billederne sig på et sted langt væk som ulegemlige idéer fra en platonisk drøm. Anna Bjergers maleriske proces udfylder ikke denne afstand, men kunne være et eksempel på modsatte ontologiske konturer: lag af maling og farvefelter lægger sig på metallet, de rører ved det. Og gennem denne berøring stræber de efter på haptisk vis at danne en kødelig fysisk krop baseret på de fotografiske kilder, der udelukkende blev skabt til de optiske organer. At berige disse med andre sanselige informationer og konstruere en krop, der kan føle gennem andre sanser, forekommer mig at være det centrale i hendes arbejde. Hvordan kan et billede bibringes vandets kølighed, uldens blødhed, en stjerneklar nats stilhed?

Det er i disse egenskaber, at den levede erfaring befinner sig hinsides afbildungen af den. Det er netop der, at vi får mulighed for at forstå livets væsen hinsides dets repræsentation. At bringe billeder ind i denne maleriske proces føles som et forsøg på at røre ved ens egen tilstedeværelse i verden, at gøre den som den strømmer uophørligt forbi, idet man hvisker: "Åh, jeg er her." Men som fænomenologien fortæller os, er dette 'levende nærvær' aldrig et rent øjeblik ... og det er disse malerier helt bevidst om. Nærværende fornemmelser trækker sig straks tilbage fra vores oplevelsesstrøm, bliver et skyggerids af nuet og skaber således forudsætningen for, hvad der skal blive det næste resultat af vores sanselige forventninger. Når disse sanselige skygger trækker sig tilstrækkeligt tilbage fra vores nuværende bevidsthed, bliver de til erindringer. Bjergers værker befinner sig i dette krydsfelt af tidsligheder; deres varierende grader af tidslig klarhed placerer dem både 'her', i deres fulde sanselige væsen, og altid lidt 'ved siden af'. Når jeg ser på disse værker i dette dynamiske samspil mellem erfaringsmuligheder, undrer jeg mig over, hvor jeg er. Det minder mig om, at jeg burde røre ved det, som Husserl kaldte 'livsverdenen', dette bundt virkelighed som omgiver os, og som er præget af den fortrolighed, der følger af at leve i den. Men hvordan rører man ved den? Jeg tænker på Anna som en, der har fundet sin egen måde at række ud mod livet og tavst holde fast i det gennem beslutsomme strøg med kulørt maling.

Netop som jeg skriver dette, er jeg halvvejs igennem Karl Ove Knausgaards *Min kamp*. Knausgaard og Bjerger har tidligere arbejdet sammen. Hun har illustreret hans bog *Om foråret*, og han har skrevet det indledende essay i et katalog over hendes værker. Da jeg

først var begyndt at reflektere over hendes praksis, kunne jeg ikke lade være med at lade billederne af hendes malerier strømme ind i billederne af Knausgaards erindringer om sin opvækst i Norge, som han mindes meget detaljeret i de første bind af sit værk. I mit fantasiunivers blev de viklet ind i hinanden for så at mødes i en fælles skandinavisk sensibilitet; en kølig melankoli, der glider ind og ud af detaljer og landskaber mellem nærbilleder af hverdagens særegne strukturer og naturens fjerne vidder. Den indre bevidsthed, der så ubesværet lader dem smelte sammen, er først og fremmest deres fælles længsel efter verden, efter at række ud efter livets detaljer. Et ønske om nærvær, om at få adgang til denne 'livsverden', som altid er fænomenologisk til stede, men som det kræver vores konstante opmærksomhed at komme igennem til.

Sommetider åbner verden sig faktisk og tilbyder sig selv på en måde, der fylder os til randen med glæden ved et gensidigt nærvær. I de øjeblikke, hvor noget trænger igennem vores omgivende virkelheds uigennemsigtighed, føler vi os levende. En ny følelsesmæssig tilstand har magt til at forvandle den himmel, vi vandrer under, som Knausgaard så levende beskriver det. I Bjergers malerier fornemmer jeg løftet om sådanne opvågninger. Dette løftes særlige, foranderlige karakter bunder i malingens materialitet: konturer og figurer er ikke anbragt på maleriets overflade, men træder snarere frem gennem flimrende farvelag. Det er formens umiddelbare beredvillighed, som stråler ud af materialet, der gør hver eneste scene, hun skildrer, så gribende, uanset hvor banalt emnet måtte synes. Der er noget på færde her, som på en gang er lysende og gådefuld, hvilket giver maleriene den modsatte funktion af et 'memento mori'. I al deres mystiske tvetydighed minder de mig om livet og om den ambivalens, der præger min oplevelse af verden.

*Robyn

Francesca Astesani,
kunstkritiker, København, august 2021



Wall, 2021
[ABM-21-002]



Blouse, 2021
[ABM-21-012]



Room, 2021
[ABM-21-005]



Piste, 2021
[ABM-21-009]



Cumulus Congestus, 2021
[ABM-21-013]



Reeds, 2021
[ABM-21-008]



Leather and soil, 2021
[ABM-21-007]



UT, 2021
[ABM-21-011]



Pike, 2021
[ABM-21-014]

So far away, but still so near*

First of all, I think of touch. But not the tender touch of a caress nor the hard grip of a hand on cold metal. It is a fingertip and the tiniest meeting it can have with a surface that I think of. A point of contact so tender and small that it can hardly reveal any of the qualities of the touched. A whisper to the world of things surrounding it: "Oh, you are here". Now, I imagine the same space between the brush and the metal surface that Anna Bjerger uses as support for her paintings, that tiny gap filled by paint. At the same time, I am captured by distances, a sense of the world inhabited from a removed standpoint; a life made of images. That reality that we access through our senses, which never stops being there, unfolding itself in an overload of qualities; how can that world disappear from us when it envelops us in a continuum that we have no power of removing ourselves from? Yet it drifts so far away at times that the body disappears, erased by the feeling of accessing our own reality through a lens.

Anna Bjerger's paintings occupy an unstable space between these opposite scales of experience. They touch life closely but as if it were made up of distant memories, images of 'a' life that, at once personal and alien, flows over and through us. It is a familiar feeling, for who has not experienced the sense of living one's own life as if it happened elsewhere? In fact, many of the motifs Bjerger chooses to paint have the quality of what we look at when we are thinking of something else: the detail of a posture, how trousers fold over a pair of leather shoes or shadows meet a wall. Or else, it is her subjects who turn away from us. Her work abounds with figures whose backs are to the viewer while others hide their faces or simply fix their gaze beyond the frame. These themes are relatable but also undefinable and affective – composed of folds, turns and absences as much as of tangibly recognisable scenes. We are left to wonder whether the clues to understanding these images are found in what lies in plain sight or are rather placed in their elusive surroundings. Doesn't our existence tease us with similar doubts?

The sense of distance in Bjerger's paintings partly originates from the photographic source of her motifs. She finds her images in existing pictures extracted from a visual archive of magazines, catalogues and old books that have accumulated in the artist's studio throughout the years. When working on a new body of work, she goes back to these source materials, again and again, often flipping through the same pages until a picture that she may have seen hundreds of times before becomes suddenly relevant for her current concerns. However, her choice of transforming a specific image and not another into a painting, and the way these then relate to each other in a body of work, operates in mysterious ways. Even though there is a clear painterly challenge in many of the works, their enigmatic quality

always overshadows their inclination towards deftness. "Something happens", says Bjerger, to explain how images become meaningful through this slow, meditative visual research. Following that, there is a change in pace: the printed sources are transformed by quick, expressionistic strokes of oil paint applied against the resistance of a metal surface. As liquid tears of colour are allowed to drip, the painting is completed.

The spatial and temporal span that photography brings to these works is rooted in a logic of the lens, which builds a world made of eyes and foreheads. In this rational operation, in which the visible that constantly inundates us is blocked out in favour of a single sight, images reside in a faraway place like disembodied ideas from a platonic dream. Anna Bjerger's painterly process doesn't fill this distance but suggests an exercise of opposite ontological contours: layers of paint and fields of colour attach themselves to the metal, they touch it. And through this touch strive to haptically shape a fleshed body on those photographic sources that were made for optic organs only. To enrich these with other sensual information and build a body that can feel through other senses seems to me to be the central operation of her work. How can an image be given the coolness of water, the softness of wool, the silence of a starry night?

These qualities are where lived experience resides beyond its image. It is precisely there that we are offered the possibility of grasping life's substance beyond its representation. Bringing images into this painterly process feels like an attempt to touch one's presence in the world, to grasp it in its incessant flow, whispering: "Oh, I am here.. But as phenomenology tells us, this 'living-present' is never a pure instant ... and these paintings know it well. Present sensations immediately withdraw from our flow of experience and become an adumbration of the now, creating the premise of what's to come next from our sensual expectations. When these sensual shadows recede enough from our present consciousness, they become memories. Bjerger's works inhabit this crossroad of temporalities; their varying degrees of temporal clarity positions them both 'here', in the fullness of their sensual substance, and always slightly 'beside'. Looking at these works, in this dynamic between possibilities of experience, makes me wonder where I am. It reminds me that I ought to touch what Husserl called the 'life-world', this bundle of reality that surrounds us and is marked by the familiarity of living within it. But how to touch it? I think of Anna, as one who has found her way to reach out to life and hold onto it silently through determined strokes of coloured paint.

At the moment of writing this, I am halfway through reading Karl Ove Knausgaard's *My Struggle*. Knausgaard and Bjerger have worked together in the past. She illustrated his volume *Spring* and he wrote the opening essay in a catalogue of her work. Once I had started reflecting on her practice, I could not stop the images of her paintings from pouring into those of Knausgaard's memories of growing up in Norway, which he recalls in great detail in the first volumes of his work. In the space of my imagination, they became entangled

with one another, meeting in a shared Scandinavian sensibility; a cool melancholia that moves in and out of details and landscapes between close-ups of everyday life's peculiar textures and the distant vastness of natural landscapes. Above all, the spirit that so effortlessly allows them to merge with one another is their common longing for the world, for reaching out to the particulars of this life. A desire for presence, to have access to that 'life-world' which is always phenomenologically present but requires our constant attention to get through to.

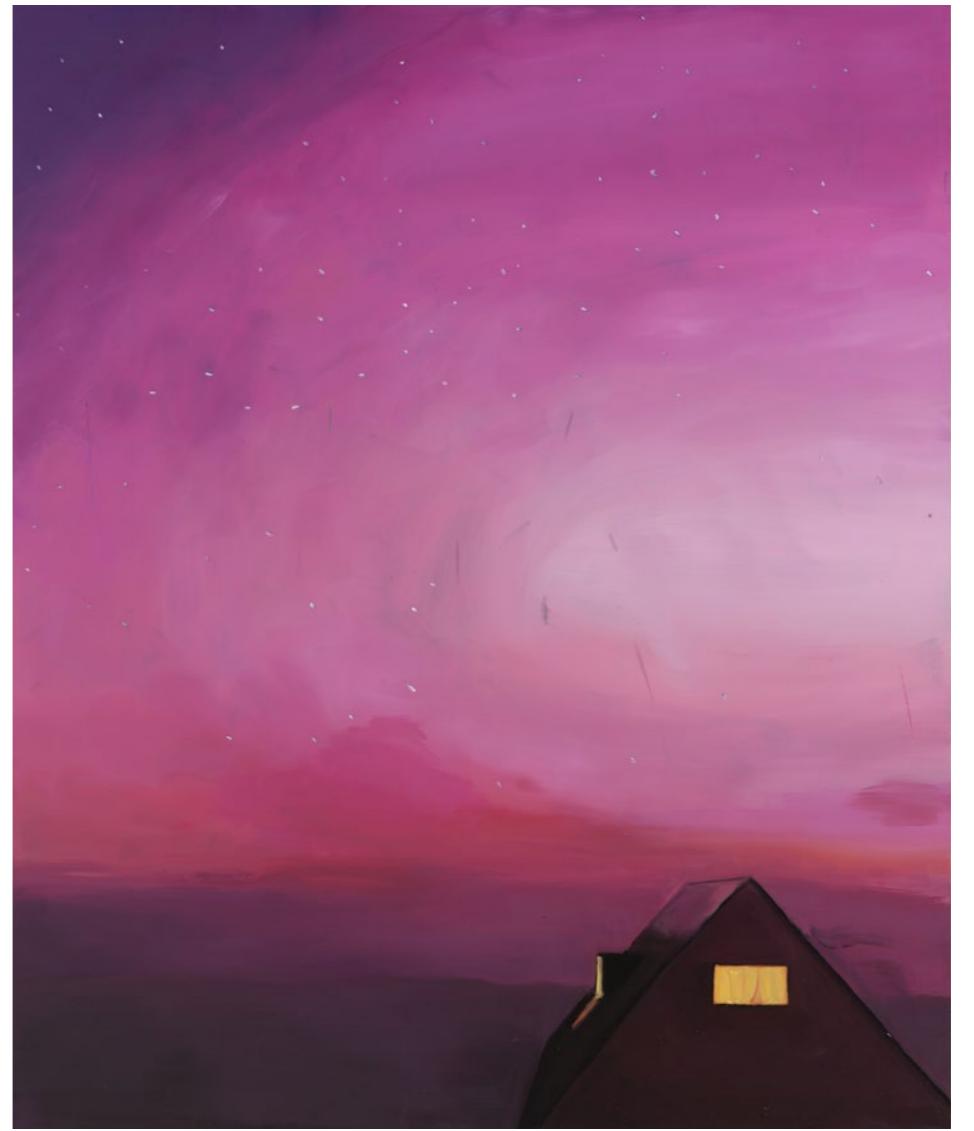
Sometimes the world does open up, offering itself in a way that fills us to the brim with the joy of a mutual presence. In those moments, when something pierces through the opacity of our surrounding reality, we feel alive. A new emotional state has the power to transfigure the sky under which we walk, as Knausgaard vividly describes. In Bjerger's paintings, I sense the promise of such awakenings. The particular, slippery quality of this promise resides in the materiality of paint: outlines and figures are not placed on the surface of the painting but rather emerge through the layers of fluttering colour. This immediate readiness of form that radiates out of the material is what makes every scene she depicts so poignant, no matter how seemingly mundane its subject might be. There is something at work here that is at once luminous and enigmatic, giving the paintings the opposite function of a 'memento mori'. In all their mysterious ambiguity they remind me of life and the ambivalent nature of my experience of the world.

*Robyn

Francesca Astesani,
Art Critic, Copenhagen, August 2021



Kayak, 2021
[ABM-21-006]



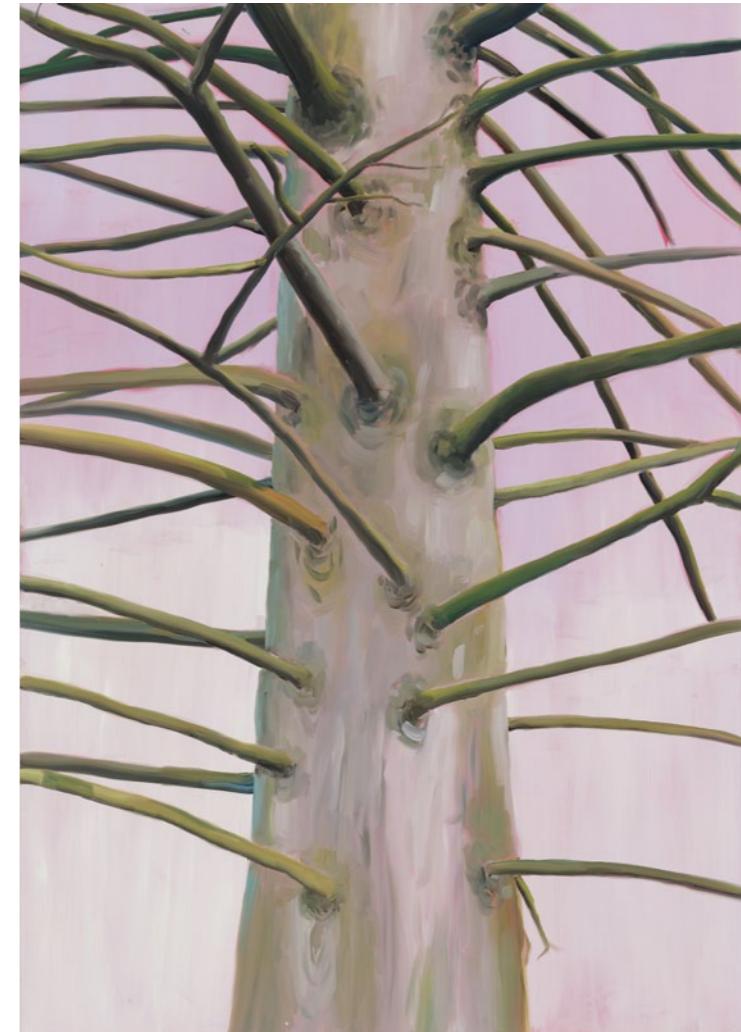
Night, 2021
[ABM-21-004]



Watchers, 2021
[ABM-21-003]



Shield, 2021
[ABM-21-010]



Trunk, 2021
[ABM-21-001]



Hem, 2021
[ABM-21-015]

ANNA BJERGER

1973 Born in Skallsjö, SE
1994-1997 BA, Fine Art, Central St. Martins School of Art and Design, London, UK
1999-2007 MA, Painting, Royal College of Art, London, UK

Lives and works in Sweden

WORKS IN COLLECTIONS

Collectie G+W Sittard, NL
Kunstmuseum Brandts, DK
Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, DK
Moderna Museet, SE
Ny Carlsberg Foundation, DK
SMK The National Gallery of Denmark, DK
Stedelijk Museum, NL
Sveriges Radio, SE
The AkzoNobel Art Foundation, NL
Vinunic, SE
Zabludowicz Collection, UK

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2021	Drifters, Galleri Bo Bjerggaard, Copenhagen, DK Blanket for a Sail, Galleri Magnus Karlsson, Stockholm, SE
2020	Dark Light, Gl. Holtegaard, Holte, DK
2019	Silence, Galleri Bo Bjerggaard, Copenhagen, DK
2018	Lit, Galleri Magnus Karlsson, Stockholm, SE Paintings, Le Manoir, Banyuls-sur-Mer, FR Slivers, 0–0 LA, Los Angeles, USA
2017	Familiar Shadows, Kristianstads Konsthall, Kristianstad, SE
2016	Elsewhere, David Risley Gallery, Copenhagen, DK Slips and Glimpses (with Robert Armstrong), Kevin Kavanagh, Dublin, IE
2015	Divining, Galleri Magnus Karlsson, Stockholm, SE
2014	Anna Bjerger, Monica de Cardenas Galleria, Milano, IT The Rorschach in practice, Patriksson Communications, Stockholm, SE

2013	Just So, Fullersta gård, Stockholm, SE
2012	6 unrelated soloshow, David Risley Gallery, Copenhagen, DK Da Capo, Paradise Row, London, UK Handling, Växjö Konsthall, SE
2011	Sand in Your Eyes, David Risley Gallery, Copenhagen, DK
2010	Every Time I Close My Eyes, Galerie Gabriel Rolt, Amsterdam, NL A Perfect Throw, Paradise Row, London, UK
2009	Strange Talents, Peter Bergman, Stockholm, SE Invisibles, Galerie Gabriel Rolt, Amsterdam, NL
2008	The Snails Trail, David Risley Gallery, London UK Everything, ALP Gallery, Stockholm, SE
2007	Portrait of a Man, Bucket Rider Gallery, Chicago, IL
2004	The Unexplained, MWprojects, London, UK Angels in Your Beer, Pumphouse Gallery, London/Oriel Mwldan, Cardigan, Wales, UK
2003	Angels in Your Beer, Chapter Gallery, Cardiff, Wales, UK
2002	White Paintings, MWprojects, London, UK
1998	Lithuanian Artist Association, Vilnius, LT

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2019	NATURE – Home and Workplace, Ljungbergmuseet, Ljungby, SE Works on Paper, Galleri Bo Bjerggaard, Copenhagen, DK
2018	NATURE – Home and Workplace, Johannes Larsen Museet, Kerteminde, DK O Youth and Beauty, Man Museum, Nuoro, IT Chair, Chair, Chair, Lamp, Table, Bed, Sofa, David Risley Gallery, Copenhagen, DK Cries and Whispers, Trafo Kunsthall, NO
2017	Submerge, Nordic Contemporary, Paris, FR Look Me in the Eye Sister, Galeria Leyendecker, Tenerife, ES In the Pines –Slight Return, David Risley Gallery, Copenhagen, DK
2016	A New Look, Moniquemeloche, Chicgao, USA Art Alive Art Festival, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, DK ILLUMINATION, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, DK
2015	Adam, Andy, Alexander, Galleri Bo Bjerggaard, Copenhagen, DK c/o Hotel le Manoir, Galleri Magnus Karlsson, Hotel le Manoir, Banyuls sur Mer, FR I Love Paint II, Angell Gallery, Toronto, CA
2012	Absence (Looking for Hammershøi), David Risley Gallery, Copenhagen, DK Kevin Kavanagh Gallery, IE Up the Walls, The Model, Sligo, IE Pigment, Peter Bergman, Stockholm, SE Anna Bjerger & Søren Martinsen, Galerie Møller Witt, Aarhus, DK

2011	Dublin Contemporary, IE Vad vi Är, Museo de la Ciudad de Querétaro, MX
	Sometimes I wish I could just disappear, David Risley Gallery, Copenhagen, DK
2009	Around the Corner, Fullersta Gård, curator Magnus Karlsson, SE Jenny Källman & Anna Bjerger, David Risley Gallery, Copenhagen, DK Women To Watch. The Figure Re-Refigured, Christies King St., London, UK Instantanés, SI/ Centre Culturel Suédois, Paris, FR
	Remain in Light, W139, Amsterdam, NL In the Pines, David Risley Gallery, Copenhagen, DK
2008	Academia, La Chapelle de l'Ecole des Beaux-Arts, Paris, FR A Loaf of Bread..., Hudson Franklin, New York, US Livingroom Paintings, Bucket Rider Gallery, Chicago, US
2007	Inaugural Group Show, Bucket Rider Gallery, Chicago, US Citadel 1, David Risley Gallery, London, UK
2006	Pictures of You, ALP Gallery, Stockholm, SE
2005	Acid drops and Sugar Candy, Transition Gallery, London, UK
2004	Twenty-four by Thirty, Keith Talent Gallery, London, UK
2003	Selected Paintings, MWprojects, London, UK The Rocca Pistola Collection, The New Inn Yard, London, UK Draw to be Alive, Hales Gallery, London, UK
2002	Immediate Gesture, Lombard-Freid Fine Arts, New York, US Love (curated by David Risley) 14 Wharf Rd, London, UK Inagural exhibition, Neon, London, UK Giardino, Museo d'Arte Contempotaneo, Sassoulo, IT Gallerie RM Art, Essen, DE
2001	Zwemmer Gallery, Trinity College, London, UK
2000	Lost in Space, Farg Fabriken, Stockholm, SE Ouvre d'etre, Temple Gallery, Rome, IT Palace, Lock Up Gallery, London, UK
	Homage to the Budokan, Foyles Gallery, London, UK Guest Artist at the British School, Rome, IT ALDRIDGE BJERGER JOFFE, Equilibri Pecari, Rome, IT

Anna Bjerger

Drifters

25.08 – 02.10 2021

Værker / Works

Anna Bjerger
Trunk, 2021
Oil on aluminium
150 cm x 105 cm;
ABM-21-001

Anna Bjerger
Wall, 2021
Oil on aluminium
183 cm x 150 cm;
ABM-21-002

Anna Bjerger
Watchers, 2021
Oil on aluminium
150 cm x 105 cm;
ABM-21-003

Anna Bjerger
Night, 2021
Oil on aluminium
180 cm x 150 cm;
ABM-21-004

Anna Bjerger
Room, 2021
Oil on aluminium
150 cm x 125 cm;
ABM-21-005

Anna Bjerger
Kayak, 2021
Oil on aluminium
105 cm x 150 cm;
ABM-21-006

Anna Bjerger
Leather and soil, 2021
Oil on aluminium
150 cm x 125 cm;
ABM-21-007

Anna Bjerger
Reeds, 2021
Oil on aluminium
125 cm x 150 cm;
ABM-21-008

Anna Bjerger
Piste, 2021
Oil on aluminium
150 cm x 125 cm;
ABM-21-009

Anna Bjerger
Shield, 2021
Oil on aluminium
150 cm x 105 cm;
ABM-21-010

Anna Bjerger
UT, 2021
Oil on aluminium
70 cm x 60 cm;
ABM-21-011

Anna Bjerger
Blouse, 2021
Oil on aluminium
180 cm x 150 cm;
ABM-21-012

Anna Bjerger
Cumulus Congestus, 2021
Oil on aluminium
200 cm x 150 cm;
ABM-21-013

Anna Bjerger
Pike, 2021
Oil on aluminium
150 cm x 305 cm;
ABM-21-014

Anna Bjerger
Hem, 2021
Oil on aluminium
150 cm x 125 cm;
ABM-21-015

PUBLICATIONS

Knausgård, Karl Ove & Karin Faxén Sporrong: Anna Bjerger, Kristianstad:
Galleri Magnus Karlsson, David Risley Gallery & Kristianstads Konsthall, 2017
Karin Faxén and Christian Viveros-Fauné: Anna Bjerger – Paintings, Stockholm:
Peter Bergman Gallery, David Risley Gallery& Galerie Gabriel Rolt, 2011

GALLERI BO BJERGGAARD

© The Artist & Galleri Bo Bjerggaard
Translation English to Danish: Sprogbiz
Photo Anders Sune Berg
ISBN 978-87-93134-48-5
Thanks to Francesca Astesani and Printdivision

Exhibition:
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