

# Emily Gernild



**Emily Gernild**

**Never Too Good to Be True**

## Mælk, muld og melankoli Om Emily Gernilds sansemættede maleri

*And touch? Educating our sensory perceptions, as I suggest we ought to do, involves reawakening the sense of touch in all of them, notably by accepting not to grasp but to be touched by the sight of the birch, the song of the wind in the woods, the scent of the rose, the taste of the raspberry or of a peach. There is also the warmth of the sun in which we can bathe, the breeze that caresses our skin, the various kinds of contacts nature offers to us.*

Luce Irigaray<sup>i</sup>

At stå foran et maleri af Emily Gernild vækker de sensoriske oplevelser, som den franske filosof Luce Irigaray taler om i citatet ovenfor. Det skaber en oplevelse af berøring, der handler om farver, former, dufte, stemninger. Eftersom scenen i Gernilds maleri sjældent er helt konkret malet frem, må øjet anstrenge sig for at orientere sig. I den proces hvirvles det ind i så mange bølgende strøg og møder så mange organiske former, jordlige farvenuancer, planter og grøntsager, måske et gult strejf af en citron, måske et glas med rødvin, at hele maleriet opfattes som en vibrerende sanseoplevelse. For her er intet klassisk perspektiv, her er alt hvirvlet op og ind i hinanden. Det særligt sensoriske handler også om, at Gernild ikke maler tykt, mættet og fedt op med maling, der lukker sig om sig selv, men bruger harelim, der skaber et åndbart og endda lidt altmodisch udtryk i maleriet. Som havde det stået i en gammel lade i 200 år og mørnet i farverne, inden det blev trukket frem og åbenbarede sine hverdagslige skildringer af så profane elementer som mad og vin. En spændvidde mellem den naturlige verden og menneskets spirituelle kultivering af den. For trods det profane er der også en henvisning til det hellige. Vinen, gralen, nadveren. Gernild skaber på den måde en forbindelse mellem rødbeden og sakramentet. Det er ikke uden humor.

Når Emily Gernild maler, gør hun det på gulvet. Lærredet ligger ned, og på den måde kan Gernild sidde tæt på lærredet, få det helt tæt på kroppen. De motiver, hun maler, har umiddelbart samme jordnære kvaliteter – planter, vækster, figner, rødbeder og citroner eller hverdagsgenstande som kander og vinglas. Ofte lader det dog til, at det er selve formerne og farverne, der interesserer Gernild, og at vinglasset eller citronen blot er en anledning til at male. For formerne repeteres, gentages og undersøges igen og igen. Er rødbeden i virkeligheden en sort citron? Eller en nyre? Emily Gernilds maleri er først og fremmest dybt kropsligt. Det ånder, skvulper og lever med sine dynamiske strejf. Væksterne er organiske, farverne ligner blod og plantefarve, mørket er altid til stede. Og det er på den måde, at Gernilds enkle motiver også handler om det eksistentielle.

I Hannah Arendts *Åndens liv* skriver hun om verdens fænomenale væsen: ”Den verden, mennesket fødes ind i, rummer mange ting, naturlige og kunstige, levende og døde, flygtige og stedsevarende, der alle har det tilfælles, at de *fremtræder* og således er bestemt til at blive set, hørt, berørt, smagt og lugtet, det vil sige opfattet af sansende væsener udrustet med de hertil egnede sanseorganer.” Alt i verden, om det er organisk eller død materie, træder frem og vil sanses af *nogen*. Og når man står foran Gernilds malerier, bliver man mindet om dét faktum. Rødbeden i al sin dybrøde sanselighed, hesten der titter frem af malerstrøgenes abstraktion, vinglassets ovale karakter med en strunk stilk, der beder om at blive taget og fyldt med berusende vin. Man kan næsten dufte og smage Gernilds malerier og måske endda høre det liv, der runger om bordet med alle vinglassene. Derfor er Gernilds malerier ikke kun undersøgelser af former, men også af deres fremtrædens sanselige, endda åndelige virkning.

Den sanselige virkning understøttes af den måde, Gernild maler på, og de materialer, hun maler med. Hun bruger ikke akryl, der mætter farven og lærredet, men også fremstår lukket og syntetisk. Hun bruger derimod som nævnt harelim, der får lærredet og farven til at vibre-re, ånde og fremstå åben, nærmest ufærdig. Harelimen er et naturmateriale, der stammer fra kaninskind, og det understøtter kun den duft af det organiske, på vej mod forrådnelse, der hersker i Gernilds værker.

*Black Lemons* lyder måske som navnet på et engelsk punkband fra 1980’erne, men det er også titlen på et af Gernilds malerier (*Citrons Noirs (Lumi)*, 2021) og på hendes seneste bog-udgivelse. De sorte citroner findes i mange af Gernilds malerier og har affinitet til noget dybt mytologisk. Den sure citroners skyggeside. Troskabens slagside. Døden.

”Var Du i det Land, hvor Citronen voxer vild? Hvor Orangen gløder i Sommersolens Ild?” spørger St. St. Blicher i *Hedelærkens Velkommenhjem til Nattergalen* (1847)<sup>iii</sup>. Citronen er i digtet en eksotisk frugt, et frugtbarhedssymbol, der handler om varme lande, lidenskab og fyrighed, som ordene” vild”, ”gløder”, ”ild” vidner om. Der er nærmest noget seksuelt utæmmet ved den citron i Blichers digt, der i resten af digtet modsvares af hjemstavns mere rolige og trygge base. Også i billedkunsten spiller citronen en afgørende rolle. Særligt i den hollandske stillebentradition fra 1600-tallet, hvor citronen næsten altid er at finde i yp-pige bordopsatser med skinnende vinglas, mad og frugter. Ofte er den skrællet på en særlig måde, så skrællen hænger dekorativt ned som en bølgende strimmel. Et veldækket bord malet i stillebentraditionen handler ikke kun om det friske måltid, men lige så meget også om altings snarlige forgængelighed. Om råddenskab og om død. Memento mori – ”husk at du skal dø” – klæber derfor også til citronen som symbol, når den males op på lærredet. Det er en tradition, som Gernild ofte refererer til med sine kander, vinglas og citroner. Den hollandske kunsthistoriker Mariet Westermann har forsket i citronen som symbol i billedkunsten, og hun forklarer i en forelæsning, at det at have en citron på bordet i 1600-tallets stillebeners lige så meget var et statussymbol, som en Louis Vuitton-taske er i dag. At have citronen på middagsbordet var også et frisk, syrligt indslag fra sydens sol. Hun forklarer,

at selvom C-vitamin endnu ikke var opdaget, fandt man hurtigt ud af, at citronens syrlighed havde en opkvikkende effekt på kroppens system, og den blev i høj grad også brugt medicinsk.<sup>iv</sup>

Citronen fremhæver, den er en smagsforstærker, men hvad fremhæver den i Gernilds malerier? Når Emily Gernild er så optaget af citronen, kiler hun sig ind i flere dimensioner på én gang: en mytologisk, en kunsthistorisk, en formmæssig, en kulinarisk og en medicinsk. Først og fremmest bliver den ofte blikfanget i maleriet. Den kommer i hendes værker ofte til at repræsentere en form for krop i et univers af mere abstrakte dimensioner. Derfor hæfter vi os ved den kropsnære, genkendelige ovale form. I den nye serie af malerier er den hverken nødvendigvis gul eller sort, men kan også være både bordeaux, beige eller bleg. Den er ikke altid en citron, men også nogle gange en aubergine, der ligner en pølse eller en nyre. Den er en organisme, der muterer og transformerer sig inden for samme firkantede maleriske ramme, hvor den bliver som en blød tåre mod den mere stramme form – maleriet som tradition, maleriet i sit kvadratiske eller rektangulære format. Den bløder op og stimulerer sanserne med sin runde form og mytiske metaforer som en livgivende puls i maleriet, der dunker kropsligt mellem de øvrige vækster og mere abstrakte dele af værket.

Der findes andre mytologiske skikkelser i Gernilds nye værkserie. Hesten for eksempel, som toner frem blandt abstrakte dele på lærredet i to malerier på udstillingen. I begge malerier ses hestens hoved forfra – de to strittende ører, de tunge øjne, lange øjenvipper, mulen. I *My Red Horse* hersker en vis melankoli over den smukke hest, malet op i blodige nuancer. Hesten har en stærkt mytologisk dimension, der er knyttet til magi og eventyr, til drift og kraft. Men Gernilds heste har ingen kroppe. Kun deres hoveder titter melankolsk frem blandt farvefelterne på lærredet. Hun maler hesten så tæt på, som amerikanske Georgia O’Keefe (1887-1986) malede blomsten. Så tæt på at det konkrete og virkelighedsnære igen bliver abstrakt. Og lige så undersøgende i farverne som fransk/ukrainske Sonia Delaunay (1885-1979) eller amerikanske Helen Frankenthaler (1928-2011), der gjorde farverne til selve maleriets omdrejningspunkt. Det er stemningen mere end virkeligheden, symbolikken mere end det konkrete, der osrer ud af lærrederne. Store strøg, runde former, smukke farver.

Gernild fortsætter på den måde også en tradition, der har klæbet sig til den kvindelige kunstner, med motiver som blomster, heste og stærke farver, hvorfor netop de motiver ikke har haft helt samme status som for eksempel det historiske maleri, portrættet eller landskabsmaleriet. De kvindelige malere har historisk ikke haft samme adgang til uddannelse, og på Det Kongelige Danske Kunstakademi fik kvinder først lige adgang med mændene i 1924. Samtidig havde de ikke adgang til de samme sociale saloner i byerne som herrerne. Derfor har både blomstermaleriet og interiører

ofte været motiver malet af de kvindelige kunstnere. Det var, hvad de havde frit adgang til. I sin nye bog *Gennembrud* gennemgår forfatter ph.d. Eva Pohl denne historiske dimension og viser mange af de tidligere danske kunstneres værker, hvoraf de fleste maler blomster. Fra Eleonora Tschernings (1817-1890) dunkle blomstermotiver til Anna Sybergs (1870-1914) vildvoksende buketter med halvvisne blomster eller en bunke rødbeder som i akvarellen *Rødbeder*. Pisa (1911), der hænger på Faaborg Museum. Også Christine Swane (1876-1960), som Gernild udstillede med på Rønnebæksholm i 2019,<sup>v</sup> malede blomster – og kander og glas, som også Gernild gør det. Der findes på den måde et kunstnerisk slægtskab med en tidligere, ofte underkendt dansk kunsthistorie, som Gernild aktualiserer, hvormed hun i en og samme gestus giver sine forgængere respekt og den kunsthistoriske udelukkelse af samme en blid finger.

I 2021 åbnede den store udstilling *Blomsten i kunsten* på Arken, hvor også Emily Gernild bidrog med et triptykon – en reference til kristendommens altertavler – af store malerier af citroner og blomster. I kunsthistoriske sammenhænge har blomstermaleriet som nævnt været opfattet som underlødigt, ligegyldigt og alt for tæt knyttet til kvinden. At Gernild kiler sig ind i og dermed fortsætter en tradition, der ikke har været stor anseelse omkring, gør kun motivet desto mere interessant at observere fra et nutidigt perspektiv. Hvorfor male motivet i dag? Kvinder har vel nok i dag både adgang til sociallivet og det politiske liv, hvorfor så male en sølle vækst, der visner om lidt?

Blomster og planter er et af tidens helt store emner i kunsten. Og selvom blomstermaleriet ikke traditionelt havde stor anerkendelse i de kunstneriske kredse, har det altid været et yndet motiv. I dag er motivet tæt koblet til vores tids største ydre udfordring – klimakrisen. Og det er, som om de sorte citroner i Gernilds værker kobler den ydre krise til en mere mental og eksistentiel tilstand. Til det indre mørke. Vores indre udfordring.

Kigger man på titlerne på værkerne til udstillingen *Never Too Good to Be True* (2022), bliver det tydeligt, at mange af Gernilds værker starter med oprindelsen. Mulden og mælken. Dét hvoraf vi alle er skabt. Den evige cirkulære livs- og dødedsdans. Ikke at Gernild konkret afbilder denne proces, men hun gør det symbolsk. Som i *Seed House*, hvor man ser alle stadier af denne livsproces: alle de potente små frø, modne røde grøntsager, rødbeder eller figner, men også en kulsort pære og en grå citron. I et andet værk, *Milk and Earth*, findes i bunden af maleriet samme repetition af de runde frø som i *Seed House*. Nu er de bare mørkere, rundere. Farverne i dette værk er dunkle, brunlige med noget gult, mørkegrønt og blått, der afstemmer det dunkle. Derfor står de hvide mælkekander helt klart frem – selvom de er på hovedet, og derfor ikke kan indeholde mange dråber af den livgivende væske. Både malerisk og farvemæssigt er der noget, der vækker mindelser om kenyansk-britiske Michael Armitages malerier (1984 -) – den skønhed, der manes frem på lærredet, er dystert suppleret af noget mere brutalt. I hans værker ofte en politisk situation. I Gernilds værker mere i form af konkrete mørke passager i maleriet eller symbolsk i form af rådne frugter og kristne referencer. Som i *Soil and Maturity*, der er holdt i den karakteristiske vinrøde farve,

som Gernild ofte benytter. Her er vinglassene helt røde – det ene i stort format i form af den hellige gral. Ovenover hænger noget, der minder om en smøg. I midten er lærredet nærmest bart, åbent, som en lille pause fra den tunge, mættede røde. Derudover to citroner, der ligner, at de er på eksistensens sidste stadie og nærmest er blevet støvbolde af mug. For citroner bliver i virkeligheden slet ikke sorte, når de går til, men muggrønne og hvide som her.

”Most of the time, we have lost the perception of the difference between meeting living beings and meeting things, be they material or spiritual, that we made”,<sup>vii</sup> skriver Luce Irigaray, og det er, som om netop den grænse mellem eksistensens yderpoler, og hvad der egentlig giver liv og puls i et maleri, er det, der optager Emily Gernild mest som maler. At finde en rytme via en sort citron.

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i Luce Irigaray, *Through Vegetal Being*, Critical Life Studies, 2016, p. 51

ii Hannah Arendt, *Åndens liv*, KLIM, 2019, p. 59

iii St. St. Blicher: *Digte*, P.L. Møller (red.), C.A. Reitzel, 1847, Bd. II, pp. 137–139.

iv Mariet Westermann, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/arts-culture/art/when-still-life-gives-you-lemons-the-significance-of-the-citrus-fruit-in-art-and-history-1.970482>

v *Upåagtet – Emily Gernild og Christine Swane*, Rønnebæksholm, 29. juni til 22. september 2019

vi Eva Pohl, *Gennembrud*, Strandberg's, 2021.

vii Luce Irigaray, *Op. Cit*, p. 85



Seed House, 2021  
[EGM-21-008]



No title (Smoke), 2021  
[EGM-21-015]



Moon Landscape, 2021  
[EGM-21-016]





My Red Horse, 2021  
[EGM-21-009]



Rider and Horse, 2021  
[EGM-21-011]



Aubergine Sausage and Grey Leaf, 2021  
[EGM-21-017]



Black and Pale Lemons, 2021  
[EGM-21-018]



Little Kidney Table, 2021  
[EGM-21-014]



Soil and Maturity, 2021  
[EGM-21-007]



No title (Sveskegrad), 2021  
[EGM-21-019]



Milk and Earth, 2021  
[EGM-21-013]



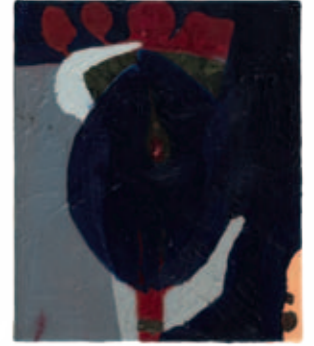
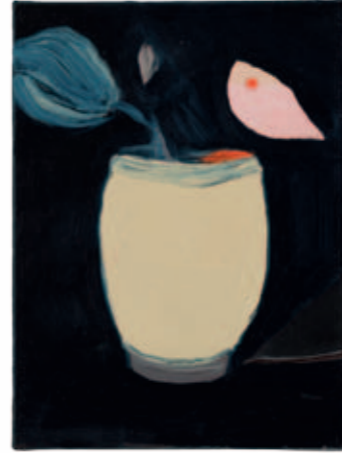
Rødbeder på fade, 2021  
[EGM-21-003]



Port, 2021  
[EGM-21-005]



Milky Doorway, 2021  
[EGM-21-012]



No title (Lille mælkekande), 2021  
[EGM-21-020]

Blue Bud, 2021  
[EGM-21-021]



## Milk, Earth, Melancholy The Sensuous Paintings of Emily Gernild

*And touch? Educating our sensory perceptions, as I suggest we ought to do, involves reawakening the sense of touch in all of them, notably by accepting not to grasp but to be touched by the sight of the birch, the song of the wind in the woods, the scent of the rose, the taste of the raspberry or of a peach. There is also the warmth of the sun in which we can bathe, the breeze that caresses our skin, the various kinds of contacts nature offers to us.*

Luce Irigaray

Standing before a painting by Emily Gernild awakens the kind of sensory experience that the French philosopher Luce Irigaray describes above. Gernild’s work evokes a sense of touch in colours, forms, scents, moods. Because the scenes in her paintings are rarely fully rendered, the eye has to work to orient itself. In the process, it is whirled into so many sinuous brushstrokes, meeting so many organic shapes, earth tones, plants and vegetables, perhaps a yellow hint of a lemon, perhaps a glass of red wine, that the whole painting is perceived as one vibrant sensory experience. There is no classical perspective here. Everything is whirled together. The singular sensuousness also results from the fact that Gernild does not work with heavy, saturated, fat paint, which closes in on itself, but uses her pigments with rabbit-skin glue, producing a breathing, even somewhat antique look, as if the painting had been left in an old barn for centuries, its paints corroding, before it was pulled out again to reveal its vernacular images of food and wine, profane subjects spanning the natural world and the spiritual human cultivation of it. Profane matters notwithstanding, there is an allusion to the sacred, as well. Wine, Grail, Supper. Gernild connects the beet and the sacrament. Her art is not without humour.

Gernild paints on the floor. Laying the canvas flat, she can keep the painting close to her body. Her subjects – plants and vegetation, figs, beets and lemons, everyday objects like jugs and glasses – have the same down-to-earth quality. Generally, it seems, shapes and colours are what interest Gernild. The wineglass or the lemon simply provides an occasion to paint. Shapes are repeated and explored over and over again. Is the beet actually a black lemon? Or a kidney? Above all, Gernild’s paintings are profoundly physical. They live, breathe and swirl in the dynamic brushwork. The growths are organic, the colours like blood and plant dye. Darkness is ever-present. In turn, Gernild’s simple subjects are also deeply existential.

In *The Life of the Mind*, Hannah Arendt investigates the world’s phenomenal nature, “The world men are born into contains many things, natural and artificial, living and

dead, transient and sempiternal, all of which have in common that they *appear* and hence are meant to be seen, heard, touched, tasted, and smelled, to be perceived by sentient creatures endowed with the appropriate sense organs.”<sup>iii</sup> Everything in the world, organic or dead matter, *appears* and is meant to be sensed by *somebody*. Standing before Gernild’s paintings reminds me of that. The beet with its deep red sensuality, the horse peeking out of abstract brushwork, the oval glass with its straight stem asking to be held and filled with heady wine. You can almost smell and taste Gernild’s paintings, perhaps even hear the roaring life around the table with all the glasses. Gernild’s paintings are investigations not just of shapes but also of their sensuous, even spiritual appearance.

The sensuous effect is underscored by Gernild’s painting style and materials. She does not use acrylics, which saturate the colours and the canvas, but look sealed-in and synthetic. As mentioned, she works with rabbit-skin glue, which makes the canvas and the colours shimmer, breathe and appear open, almost unfinished. A natural material, rabbit-skin glue accentuates the air of the organic, of putrefaction, that permeates Gernild’s paintings.

*Black Lemons* may sound like an English punk band from the 1980s, but in fact it is the title of one of Gernild’s paintings, *Citrons Noirs (Lumi)*, 2021, and of her latest book. Black lemons appear in many of the artist’s paintings and are bound up with something deeply mythological. The shadow of the sour lemon. The dark side of fidelity. Death.

“Were you in the land where the lemon grows wild? Where the orange glows in the fire of the summer sun?” asks St. St. Blicher in *The Woodlark Welcomes the Nightingale* (1847)<sup>iii</sup>. The poem’s lemon is an exotic fruit, a fertility symbol denoting warmer climes, passion and ardour, as embodied in the words “wild”, “glows” and “fire”. There is something almost sexually untrammelled about Blicher’s lemon that, in the remainder of the poem, is tempered by the calmer safe base of the homeland. The lemon is also a key ingredient in visual art, especially in 17th-century Dutch still lifes, whose abundant tabletop tableaux of shiny glasses, food and fruit almost invariably include a lemon. Often, the lemon is peeled just so with a decorative serpentine of peel hanging down. In the still-life tradition, a bountiful table is not just about a fresh meal. It is also about the transience of all things. About rot and death. Memento mori – “remember that you will die” – clings to the symbol of the painted lemon. Gernild often references this tradition with her water jugs, wineglasses and lemons. The Dutch art historian Mariet Westermann has researched the symbol of the lemon in art. In a lecture, she explains that having a lemon on the table in 17th-century still lifes was a status symbol in the same way that a Louis Vuitton bag is today. Moreover, lemons on the dinner table provided a fresh, zesty taste of the southern sun. Although vitamin C had not been discovered yet, Westermann says, people quickly realized that the lemon’s acidity had an invigorating effect on the body. Lemons had wide medicinal use, as well.<sup>iv</sup>

Lemons enhance. They make everything taste better. But what do lemons enhance in Gernild's paintings? In her obsession with lemons, the artist penetrates into several dimensions at once – mythological, art historical, shape-related, culinary, medical. Above all, the lemon is eye-catching, a visual hook in the painting. In Gernild's work, it generally represents a body in a universe of more abstract dimensions; we fasten on its physically familiar oval shape. In Gernild's new series of paintings, the lemon is not necessarily yellow, or black, but claret, beige or pale. It may not even be a lemon but an aubergine, resembling a sausage or a kidney. It is an organism mutating and morphing inside the same rectangular frame, a soft teardrop against a more rigid form – painting as tradition, in its square or rectangular format. It softens, stimulating the senses with its round shape and mythical metaphors. A life-giving pulse in the painting, it throbs like a body among the other growths and more abstract elements of the work.

Other mythological figures appear in Gernild's new series. Horses emerge from more abstract areas of two paintings. In both, the horse's head is seen from the front – perky ears, heavy eyes, long eyelashes, muzzle. In *My Red Horse*, melancholy pervades the magnificent animal painted in sanguine hues. The horse has a strong mythological dimension, bound up with magic and adventure, drive and power. Gernild's horses are bodiless. Only their heads look out mournfully from the colours on the canvas. She paints horses as close up as the American artist Georgia O'Keefe (1887-1986) painted flowers, so close up that the concrete and reality-bound becomes abstract again. She explores colour like the French / Ukrainian artist Sonia Delaunay (1885-1979) or the American painter Helen Frankenthaler (1928-2011), who made colour the crux of the painting. Gernild's canvases ooze atmosphere more than reality, symbolism more than concreteness. Bold brushwork, round shapes, gorgeous colours.

In this way, Gernild also continues a tradition that has clung to women artists by dint of subjects like flowers and horses, and bright colours. Consequently, these subjects have enjoyed nothing like the status of history painting, portraiture and landscape. Historically, women artists did not have equal access to training; the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen did not accept female students until 1924. Nor did women have the same access to the city's salons. Women artists often painted flower paintings and interiors, because that is what they had access to. In her new book, *Gennembrud* (Breakthrough), the Danish author and critic Eva Pohl, Ph.D., reviews that historical dimension, presenting works by many early Danish women artists, most of whom painted flowers – from Eleonora Tscherning's (1817-1890) dark floral motifs to Anna Syberg's (1870-1914) sprawling bouquets with wilting flowers or even a pile of beets, in *Beets*. Pisa (1911), a watercolour at

Faaborg Museum. Christine Swane (1876-1960), alongside whom Gernild exhibited at Rønnebæksholm in 2019, likewise painted flowers – as well as jugs and glasses, like Gernild.<sup>vi</sup> Embodying a contemporary take on a past, often overlooked area of Danish art history, Gernild pays respect to her predecessors while calmly flipping the bird to art history's exclusion of them.

In 2021, the Arken Museum of Modern Art mounted a major exhibition, *Flowers in Art*. Gernild's contribution was a large triptych, alluding to Christian altarpieces, of lemons and flowers. In the context of art history, as mentioned, flower painting has been viewed as inferior, insignificant and too closely associated with women. Gernild's inserting herself into and continuing this low-prestige tradition only makes the subject of flowers more interesting from a contemporary perspective. Why paint flowers today? Women have equal access to society and politics, so why even paint a lowly soon-to-wilt flower?

Flowers and plants are one of the leading subjects in art today. Even if flowers did not traditionally receive much recognition in art circles, they were always a popular subject. Today, the subject is closely bound up with the greatest challenge of our age – the climate crisis. The black lemons in Gernild's works seem to link the external crisis to a mental, existential state, to interior darkness, our inner challenge.

Looking at the titles of the works in *Never Too Good to Be True* (2022) reveals that many of Gernild's works start with the primeval. Earth and milk. What we are all made from. The eternal, circular dance of life and death. Not that Gernild concretely depicts that process. But symbolically, she does. As in *Seed House*, which shows all stages of the life process: all the potent little seeds, ripe, red vegetables, beets and figs, a pitch-black pear and a grey lemon. At the bottom of another painting, *Milk and Earth*, we see the same repetition of round seeds as in *Seed House*, but now the seeds are darker, rounder. The colours here are murky and brown, offset by flashes of yellow, dark green and blue. The white milk jugs stand out brightly – upside down to boot, they could not be containing many drops of the life-giving fluid. The painterliness and the colours recall the work of the Kenyan-British artist Michael Armitage (1984-) the beauty evoked on the canvas is gloomily complemented by something more brutal. In Armitage's work, often a political situation. In Gernild's work, often in the form of dark passages, or symbolically as rotten fruit and allusions to Christianity. *Soil and Maturity* is kept in Gernild's characteristic wine-red hues. The wineglasses are completely red. One is large, shaped like the Holy Grail. Above it hangs something that looks like a cigarette. The centre of the canvas is almost bare, open, like a short respite from the heavy, saturated red. Moreover, two lemons appear to be in the final stage of life, decaying into fuzz balls of mould. Lemons do not really turn black, of course, but mouldy green and white, as shown here.

“Most of the time, we have lost the perception of the difference between meeting living beings and meeting things, be they material or spiritual, that we made.”<sup>vii</sup> Irigaray writes. This boundary between the extremes of existence is what adds life and pulse to a painting and what occupies Emily Gernild most as a painter. Finding a rhythm via a black lemon.

**Maria Kjær Thomsen**

January 2022



- i Luce Irigaray, *Through Vegetal Being*, *Critical Life Studies*, 2016, p. 51.
- ii Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, Harcourt Inc., 1971 (1977, 1978), p. 19.
- iii St. St. Blicher: *Digte*, P.L. Møller (ed.), C.A. Reitzel, 1847, Vol. II, p. 137–139.
- iv Mariet Westermann, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/arts-culture/art/when-still-life-gives-you-lemons-the-significance-of-the-citrus-fruit-in-art-and-history-1.970482>.
- v *Upåagtet* – Emily Gernild og Christine Swane, Rønnebæksholm, 29 June – 22 September 2019.
- vi Eva Pohl, *Gennembrud*, Strandberg, 2021.
- vii Luce Irigaray, *op. cit.*, p. 85.



Untitled, 2021  
[EGZ-21-013]



Untitled, 2021  
[EGZ-21-019]



The End, 2021  
[EGZ-21-026]



Untitled, 2021  
[EGZ-21-017]



Untitled, 2021  
[EGZ-21-016]



Untitled, 2021  
[EGZ-21-018]



Untitled, 2021  
[EGZ-21-014]



Untitled, 2021  
[EGZ-21-010]



Untitled, 2021  
[EGZ-21-020]



Untitled, 2021  
[EGZ-21-021]



Untitled, 2021  
[EGZ-21-023]



Untitled, 2021  
[EGZ-21-024]





Untitled, 2021  
[EGZ-21-022]

## EMILY GERNILD

- 1985** Born in Odense, DK.  
**2010-2016** Funen Art Academy  
**2013-2014** Düsseldorf Kunstakademie, prof. Tal R

Lives and works in Copenhagen .

### SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2022 *Never Too Good to Be True*, Galleri Bo Bjerggaard, Copenhagen, DK  
OSL Contemporary, Oslo, NO
- 2021 *Under Skumring*, M100, Odense, DK  
*Black Lemons*, SCHWARZ CONTEMPORARY, DE
- 2020 *Domestic Landscapes*, Gallery Kant, DK
- 2019 *Before and After*, House for Art and Design, Holstebro, DK  
*Upåtaget*, Rønnebæksholm, Næstved, DK
- 2018 *Moveable Feast*, SCHWARZ CONTEMPORARY, DE  
*Coquetish*, Gallery Kant, DK
- 2016 *Graduated 2016*, Galleri DGV, DK
- 2014 *Return 2014*, Gallery LB, DK

### SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2021 *Blomsten i kunsten*, Arken Museum for Modern Art, DK  
*Vokseværk*, Kastrupgaardsamlingen, DK  
*Dagsrester og andre pressede citroner* – dialogue exhibition with Martha Hviid, Gammelgaard Kunst og Kulturcenter, Herlev, DK  
*EFTERBILLEDER*, JANUS Vestjyllands Kunstmuseum, DK
- 2020 *Seniornotater*; Midt I en Covid-tid, Trapholt, DK  
"29,7 \* 19,8", Sydhavn Station, Copenhagen, DK
- 2018 Royal Copenhagen x Emily Gernild x Edition Copenhagen "Elements" (designed by Louise Campbell) 10-year Anniversary, Tokyo, JP  
*Annual Owl Sculpture*, Royal Copenhagen x Emily Gernild  
*Remix #4*, Kunstmix.dk  
*On the Home Front*, Gallery Kant, DK
- 2017 *Between the Line and the Lavish*, Gallery KANT, DK  
*Stills*, Gallery KANT
- 2015 *You're Just Too Good To Be True*, curated group show by Tal R and Juergen Teller, CFA, Berlin, DE
- 2014 *In the House*, Pop-Up group show Bjelkes Alle Nørrebro, DK

### PUBLICATIONS

- Black Lemons, Emily Gernild, Kerber Verlag 2021  
Gernild/Swane: Gernild x Swane 2019

### PUBLIC COMMISSIONS

- Holbæk Art, Holbæk, DK 2020  
Decoration for Undervisningsministeriet, Svendborg, DK 2019

### AWARDS

- Honorary grant, Niels Wessel Bagge's Arts Foundation 2021



Untitled, 2021  
[EGZ-21-025]

## Emily Gernild

*Never Too Good to Be True*

21.01.2022 – 05.03.2022

### Værker / Works

Emily Gernild  
Rødbeder på fade, 2021  
Acrylic, oil paint, rabbit glue and oil pastel on linen  
170 cm x 130 cm  
EGM-21-003

Emily Gernild  
Port, 2021  
Rabbit-skin glue, pigment, pastels, bees wax and oil stick on linen  
220 cm x 190 cm  
EGM-21-005

Emily Gernild  
Soil and Flowerbud, 2021  
Rabbit-skin glue, pigment, pastels, oil stick and acrylic on jute  
220,0 cm x 190,0 cm  
EGM-21-006

Emily Gernild  
Soil and Maturity, 2021  
Rabbit-skin glue, pigment, pastels and acrylic on jute  
220 cm x 190 cm  
EGM-21-007

Emily Gernild  
Seed House, 2021  
Rabbit-skin glue, oil stick, pastel and pigment on canvas  
190 cm x 220 cm  
EGM-21-008

Emily Gernild  
My Red Horse, 2021  
Oil, rabbit-skin glue, gesso, pastel, pigment, and oil stick on linen  
180 cm x 150 cm  
EGM-21-009

Emily Gernild  
White and Rosy, 2021  
Rabbit-skin glue, pigment, acrylic, gesso, pastel, oil and oil stick on linen  
180 cm x 150 cm  
EGM-21-010

Emily Gernild  
Rider and Horse, 2021  
Rabbit-skin glue, pigment, oil, acrylic and pastels on linen  
180 cm x 150 cm  
EGM-21-011

Emily Gernild  
Milky Doorway, 2021  
Oil, oil stick, rabbit-skin glue, pigment and acrylic on canvas  
170 cm x 130 cm  
EGM-21-012

Emily Gernild  
Milk and Earth, 2021  
Rabbit-skin glue, oil, oilstick, pastels, acrylic and oil on linen  
170 cm x 130 cm  
EGM-21-013

Emily Gernild  
Little Kidney Table, 2021  
Rabbit-skin glue, oil stick, oil, acrylic and pastels on linen  
130 cm x 170 cm  
EGM-21-014

Emily Gernild  
No title (Smoke), 2021  
Linen, oil, oil stick, pastels, rabbit-skin glue and acrylic on jute  
80 cm x 60 cm  
EGM-21-015

Emily Gernild  
Moon Landscape , 2021  
Oil, oil stick and pastels on canvas  
100 cm x 80 cm  
EGM-21-016

Emily Gernild  
Aubergine Sausage and Grey Leaf , 2021  
Oil and oil stick on canvas  
70 cm x 50 cm  
EGM-21-017

Emily Gernild  
Black and Pale Lemons, 2021  
Oil on canvas  
30 cm x 30 cm  
EGM-21-018

Emily Gernild  
No title (Sveskegrød), 2021  
Oil and oil stick on canvas  
40 cm x 40 cm  
EGM-21-019

Emily Gernild  
No title (Lille mælkekande), 2021  
Oil on canvas  
40 cm x 30 cm  
EGM-21-020

Emily Gernild  
Blue Bud, 2021  
Oil and oil stick on canvas  
30 cm x 25 cm  
EGM-21-021

Emily Gernild  
Untitled, 2021  
Aquarelle and acrylic on paper  
61 cm x 81 cm  
EGZ-21-010

Emily Gernild  
Untitled, 2021  
Rabbit-skin glue, oil stick and aquarelle on paper  
59 cm x 29 cm  
EGZ-21-013

Emily Gernild  
Untitled, 2021  
Aquarelle and rabbit-skin glue on paper  
59 cm x 29 cm  
EGZ-21-014

Emily Gernild  
Untitled, 2021  
Rabbit-skin glue, acrylic and aquarelle on paper  
59 cm x 29 cm  
EGZ-21-016

Emily Gernild  
Untitled, 2021  
Aquarelle, pastels, oil stick and rabbit-skin glue on paper  
59 cm x 29 cm  
EGZ-21-017

Emily Gernild  
Untitled, 2021  
Aquarelle, pastels, oil stick and rabbit-skin glue on paper  
61 cm x 29 cm  
EGZ-21-018

Emily Gernild  
Untitled, 2021  
Rabbit-skin glue, pastels, oil stick, acrylic on paper  
61 cm x 71 cm  
EGZ-21-019

Emily Gernild  
Untitled, 2021  
Aquarelle, acrylic, oil stick and pastels on paper  
50,5 cm x 25,0 cm  
EGZ-21-020

Emily Gernild  
Untitled, 2021  
Aquarelle, pastels and oil stick on paper  
50,5 x 25 cm  
EGZ-21-021

Emily Gernild  
Untitled, 2021  
Aquarelle, pigment and oil stick on paper  
40,5 cm x 50,0 cm  
EGZ-21-022

Emily Gernild  
Untitled, 2021  
Aquarelle, pastels and oil stick on paper  
78,5 cm x 29,5 cm  
EGZ-21-023

Emily Gernild  
Untitled, 2021  
Aquarelle and pastels on paper  
78,5 cm x 29,5 cm  
EGZ-21-024

Emily Gernild  
Untitled, 2021  
Aquarelle and rabbit-skin glue on paper  
59 cm x 29 cm  
EGZ-21-025

Emily Gernild  
The End, 2021  
Rabbit-skin glue and aquarelle on paper  
35 cm x 31 cm  
EGZ-21-026

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Exhibition:  
Emily Gernild  
*Never Too Good to Be True*

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