

ART AT EP

WORKS OF ART FROM

Organised by the European Parliament
in cooperation with the Danish Presidency
of the Council of the European Union.



European
Parliament

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Courtesy SMK and The Estate of Troels Wörsel (for Troels Wörsel: Untitled)

This publication was produced in Luxembourg, for information purposes, for the Danish Presidency Exhibition 2025, featuring works from the European Parliament Contemporary Art Collection and SMK – National Gallery of Denmark. It is intended to provide educational details about the background and artistic legacy of the artists whose creations are displayed, and to preserve and promote their contribution to Europe's cultural heritage.

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WORKS OF ART FROM

D E N M A R K

F O R E W O R D



ROBERTA METSOLA

President of the European Parliament

Denmark's Presidency of the Council of the EU offers an opportunity to showcase Danish culture, perspectives and daily life. For over a decade, the European Parliament has proudly hosted exhibitions featuring artwork from the Member States holding the rotating presidencies. In this exhibition, works by leading Danish artists invite us to reflect on the values and principles that shape Danish society and offer a glimpse of Denmark today.

The featured artworks explore themes of landscape, nature and environmental protection. Ursula Reuter Christiansen probes the subtle nuances and transformations in landscape, Christian Schmidt-Rasmussen presents climate change through humorous exaggeration and Bjørn Nørgaard reminds us that, as humans, we are an integral part of our environment. These and the many other pieces on display offer a space for dialogue and introspection, inviting us to consider our relationship with landscape, how we perceive it and how it affects us.

Established by former President of the European Parliament Simone Veil in 1980, the European Parliament Contemporary Art Collection has grown to include nearly 600 works by European artists that inspire, challenge and ultimately bring us together in reflection. The collection holds several Danish pieces, and I am pleased that this year it will gain two additional works by Jeannette Ehlers and Tove Storch. Ehlers' photography explores themes of colonialism, race and memory, while Storch tests the limits and possibilities of sculpture.

Art connects us, fosters dialogue and encourages us to examine our shared experience — in short, it brings us closer to Europe. As the EU's House of Democracy, we will always support the arts and artistic expression.

I would like to thank everyone who made this exhibition possible, and I invite you to enjoy this carefully curated collection that brings Denmark to life.

I wish you an enjoyable and inspiring visit.

F O R E W O R D



JAKOB ENGEL-SCHMIDT

Danish Minister for Culture

From 1 July to 31 December 2025, Denmark holds the presidency of the Council of the European Union for the eighth time. The rotating presidency provides an opportunity to explore the unique culture of each EU Member State and celebrate the cultural diversity shaping Europe. I am delighted to take part in the valued tradition of organising a Council presidency exhibition at the European Parliament, and in so doing offer a curated glimpse of the vibrant tapestry of the contemporary Danish art scene.

Featuring several works from the National Gallery of Denmark and from the European Parliament's own collection, this exhibition showcases a range of techniques and art forms, including pieces by leading artists Bjørn Nørgaard and Ursula Reuter Christiansen.

The artworks in this selection centre on the relationship between nature and humanity and explore how the landscapes surrounding us become part of our emotional reality. This focus resonates with the pressing environmental challenges of our time. As climate change increasingly disrupts ecosystems and reshapes landscapes, art responds by reflecting on our struggle to live in harmony with the natural world. This is a testament to the crucial role of art and culture in our democratic discourse.

The cultural agenda of the Danish Presidency is founded on the fundamental role of culture in upholding European values and democratic resilience. Culture possesses a unique ability to convey our shared values, identity and history, while fostering social cohesion, dialogue and critical thinking. At a time of changing international order and geopolitical pressure, safeguarding European democratic values and resilience through our cultural diversity is more important than ever. It is my ambition to place these perspectives at the very heart of EU cultural policy.

I invite you to discover this exquisite selection of Danish contemporary art and to be captivated by the artworks' reflections on some of the most pressing questions facing our society.

F O R E W O R D



MIRIAM LEXMANN

Quaestor and Chair of the Artistic Committee
of the European Parliament

‘A strong Europe in a changing world’ – this is the slogan of the 2025 Danish Presidency of the Council of the EU, which focuses on two overarching priorities: a secure Europe and a competitive, green Europe. Security and competitiveness are indeed among the most pressing political and economic challenges of our time.

The 2025 Danish Presidency Exhibition at the European Parliament, however, offers us a moment to pause and appreciate human artistic creativity. We have the pleasure of admiring artworks from the National Gallery of Denmark, alongside two pieces from our own contemporary art collection. What unites these works is their reflection on the relationship between humans and nature – in all its richness and emotional depth. They express the feelings that nature evokes in us.

As part of the exhibition, the Esplanade of the European Parliament in Brussels is host to an installation, entitled One Two Three Swing!, by Danish art collective SUPERFLEX. It is composed of interconnected swings suspended from striking orange steel frames, and has already been exhibited in several countries. Each new location adds to a growing network that connects people, cultures and climates across the globe.

The European Parliament Contemporary Art Collection includes 17 visual artworks of Danish origin, most of them acquired in the 1980s and early 1990s. This year, we will further enrich our collection with two new works by acclaimed Danish artists Jeannette Ehlers and Tove Storch. These will be unveiled in the autumn. In acquiring these works, the European Parliament continues its commitment to increasing the representation of women artists in its collection.

‘Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards.’ This insight from renowned Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard speaks to a deep truth about the human experience: while clarity often comes with hindsight, we are called to navigate life with courage and vision, even in the face of uncertainty.

I wish you all a wonderful exhibition experience.

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary art holds a prominent place in the European Parliament today. Nearly 600 artworks are on display each day in its key workspaces and public areas, offering a vision of Europe through the eyes of its artists.

The motto of the EU, 'United in diversity', aptly describes this unique collection, which has been developing for over 45 years.

Established in 1980 by a decision of the then President of the European Parliament, Simone Veil, the collection initially grew organically. Decisions by individual Member States significantly shaped its development, and there was little unifying curatorial direction in its first few decades.

This changed in 2019, when the European Parliament adopted ambitious new rules governing art acquisitions and donations. This new strategy aimed to strengthen diversity, move closer to a gender balance, and ensure fair representation of all of the Member States in the collection. Thematically, new acquisitions focus on current social issues and their relevance to the European Parliament's legislative priorities.

Six years on from that change, we can affirm that the collection has maintained its high artistic value, while being enriched with new works addressing themes such as ecology, migration, equality, freedom and democracy. The proportion of women artists represented in the collection has also increased. We are also making steady progress in correcting the proportional representation of artists of the different Member States in the collection.

These new rules were also applied to the most recent round of acquisitions, during which two artworks from Denmark were added to the collection. Both feature in the temporary exhibition *Extending the Gaze*, and expand to 19 the number of Danish artworks in the collection.

Each national segment of the European Parliament's art collection is unique, an invaluable testament to its time and its country. The Danish artworks in the European Parliament Contemporary Art Collection offer a compelling cross-section of late 20th and early 21st century Danish art. These showcase distinct artistic voices as well as shared thematic currents, and demonstrate vitality and variety in their approaches and techniques.

From the mythological introspection of Herman Stilling and the socially engaged colour compositions of Ole Sparring, to the metaphysical landscapes of Gunnar Møller, the dynamic, multi-dimensional paintings of Bentemarie Kjeldbæk, the regionally grounded tapestries of Nanna Hertoft, the conceptual narratives of Berit Heggenhougen-Jensen and the politically charged sculptures of Jens Galschiøt, the collection reflects rich artistic diversity.

This wide range of work illustrates how Danish artists engage with global influences and contemporary social challenges, while preserving a deep connection to national heritage and identity. The Danish contributors span multiple generations, and their variety of influences and responses further enriches the European Parliament Contemporary Art Collection.

The European Parliament acquired its first Danish artworks in 1983, alongside pieces from Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands and Luxembourg. The first Danish acquisition consisted of seven works, among them textile pieces by Hertoft, Jette Bronnum and Margrethe Agger, as well as paintings by Møller and Peter Brandes.

A second wave of acquisitions followed in 1990, including works by artists based in Belgium, Germany, Greece and Denmark. Among the Danish works acquired were paintings by Claus Carstensen, Dorte Dahlin and Berit Heggenhougen-Jensen, key figures in Denmark's 'Young Wild Ones' (*De Unge Vilde*) art movement.

In 2010, the European Parliament displayed what would become one of the most iconic works in its collection: Galschiøt's *Man on a Bench*. This sculpture was created for the 'Ending Homelessness is Possible' project, and was exhibited in several European cities. The statue has been on permanent display at the European Parliament since 2014.

The 2025 Danish Presidency Exhibition explores the ever-relevant relationship between humanity and nature. It presents artworks that explore our connection to the landscape – not from a narrow or literal perspective, but one that seeks deeper resonance.

The selection displayed here aims to move beyond simple depictions of environment and landscape, instead seeking to convey, through artistic invention, the subtle emotional resonances, ideas and sensory experiences arising from humanity's relationship with nature.

This exhibition offers a contemplative space, a moment of calm within the dynamic environment of the European Parliament. Interestingly, the Polish Presidency Exhibition, which took place in the first half of 2025, also created a similar space for reflection and rest. It is as if these exhibitions gently invite us to pause, reflect and reconnect.

Cultural Outreach Unit
DG COMM

INTRODUCTION

How do we relate to nature and the landscape around us at a time when nature is being threatened, monitored and romanticised? How does art reflect our relationship with the landscapes we are part of? This selection of works from the National Gallery of Denmark looks at the role nature plays in human life and in our collective imagination. The works are about more than landscapes and the environment: they are about existence, the body, perception – and art's ability to portray something that cannot be put into words.

We are used to nature often appearing in the form of figures, statistics and climate models, but art suggests something else. It is a form of cognition that is transmitted through the senses, the visual and the imagination. A number of the works portray our human experience of being in – and outside – nature: not factually, but as moods and narratives.

Several of the works deal with something we could call nature's inner mirror: the way in which we take in our surroundings as part of our emotional reality. Nature is not merely a place: it is also a concept, and sometimes a metaphor for our inner landscape. Whether through floating human figures, snowmen warming themselves by a woodburning stove, or a fraught, fragmented fringe of a forest, the works invite us to think about our place in the landscape and in the ecological cycle.

This selection of works shows how nature in art can be both recognisable and mysterious. In some it appears as a mystical element, in others as a direct commentary on climate change or human-made crises. All the works relate to the fragile relationship between humans and their surroundings.

One of art's strengths lies in its ability to insist that we can arrive at perceptions that differ from those we come across in statistics and charts. Amid the hustle and bustle of the Parliament building, these works will hopefully create a space for sensuousness and reflection, a place where art opens up our gaze and reminds us that nature is not just something external, but something we can find in our imagination, in our fears and in our dreams.

Camilla Jalving

Deputy Director, Collections and Research SMK National Gallery of Denmark

**F E A T U R E D
A R T I S T S**

LENE ADLER PETERSEN

NANNA HERTOFT

BJØRN NØRGAARD

URSULA REUTER CHRISTIANSEN

CHRISTIAN SCHMIDT-RASMUSSEN

TROELS WÖRSEL

JEANNETTE EHLERS

TOVE STORCH

SUPERFLEX

Lene ADLER PETERSEN

Untitled: The Pictures Gravitation, 1982

Lene Adler Petersen (b. 1944) is one of the most significant figures in Danish contemporary art and a feminist pioneer of the Danish avant-garde. Trained at the Jutland Art Academy (1964-1966) and the Royal Danish Academy (1968-1969), Adler Petersen was central to the scene surrounding the experimental *Eks-skolen* (Ex-School), set up in 1961 as an alternative to the Academy to facilitate collective work and broaden the concept of what an artwork could be. Her work explores feminism, human rights and anti-capitalism and is enormously wide-ranging, spanning painting, drawing, sound, graphics, ceramics, text, books, film and photography. She is behind a string of iconic art actions, including, in 1969, *Den Kvindelige Kristus* (The Female Christ), a feminist performance that still stands as one of the most significant in Danish art history, in which she walked naked through the Copenhagen Stock Exchange holding a cross in her hand.

While Adler Petersen's earlier work is characterised by a pronounced collectivism and an activist approach to art, in the late 1970s she shifted her focus inward, meticulously documenting patterns of domestic light, everyday objects and personal belongings – frequently presenting them in poetic terms, accompanied by texts. *Untitled: The Pictures Gravitation* (1982) belongs to this body of work. In it, the artist presents a recurring motif of her painting and sculpture: an amphora or pot. The triangular, light-like section on the left and the angular line work towards the centre create formal ties, hinting at gravitation – a visual play on balance, pull and everyday gravity – while the geometric motifs are redolent of the visual language she uses in other work. *The Untitled* series of oil paintings was created in 1982: through her use of intense colours, in particular, Adler Petersen conveys intense physicality via a matured visual expression that remains political yet subtly formalised.



© Sabam Belgium, 2025

Oil on panel, 122 × 122 cm
European Parliament Contemporary Art Collection

Nanna HERTOFT

Fougère rouge, 1983

Nanna Hertoft (b. 1936) became a prominent figure in the field of Nordic textile art, following her debut at the 1960 Artists' Autumn Exhibition in Copenhagen. Using natural cotton and linen, she plays with texture and yarn shifts to produce landscape-inspired weavings known for their intuitive, lyrical abstraction.

Hertoft's large pieces are often divided into hanging banners or joined by vertical seams. In making them, she employs a template-free technique – a method she inherited from her mother, which allows for organic and

spontaneous compositions. Her distinctive style, blending greens, blues and earth tones, together with local motifs, captures a Nordic feel that has earned her recognition across Denmark and the other Nordic countries. The tapestry *Fougère Rouge*, made in 1983, features these kinds of local motifs and earth tones, with stylised leaves and branches merging into an almost abstract design that balances graphic impact with a tactile allure.



© EP 2025

Tapestry, 205 × 140 cm
European Parliament Contemporary Art Collection

Bjørn NØRGAARD

Architectura Humanae, 1988

The relationship between the body and the world has always been a central element of Bjørn Nørgaard's work, from his earliest actions – where he cast his feet in plaster, or shut himself into the exhibition space as a living element – to the ritual and political ones he performed together with his partner, Lene Adler Petersen.

These human and bodily references are also integral to his monumental art projects, for which his smaller sculptures, such as *Architectura Humanae*, can be seen as programmatic and conceptual models.

Exploring the proportions of nature and of humankind and identifying a rationale that underpins them is something that has fascinated artists and philosophers for centuries. 'The whole hand will be the tenth part of the man', 'From the bottom of the chin to the top of his head is an eighth of his height', 'From the nipples to the top of the head will be the fourth part of the height'. This is what the Roman architect Vitruvius wrote in the first century BCE in his influential treatise *De Architectura Libri Decem* (Ten Books on Architecture). Many centuries later, Leonardo da Vinci made his famous drawing of 'The

Vitruvian Man', showing a naked man in two different, overlapping positions, with all the proportions of the body in perfect alignment with Vitruvius' principles.

Vitruvius argued that the symmetry and proportions of buildings should be based on the human form. This idea has endured through the centuries. It was taken up by modernism, with Le Corbusier and his 'Modulor' being well-known examples of efforts to design buildings using standardised measurements based on human proportions. Characteristically, the measurements were always based on those of a healthy young white male.

For Nørgaard, it is not about coming up with the perfect mathematical rule or constructive solution, but, on a conceptual level, creating frameworks for humans that are actually based on humans. His architectural structure is less about ideal mathematical measurements than social notions of our shared and collective capacity for load-bearing. In keeping with this, the modelled human figures are marked with both male and female symbols, and together they form the load-bearing columns of the sculpture's temple-like structure.



© Bjørn Nørgaard / VISDA

Bronze, 63 × 21 × 23 cm
SMK National Gallery of Denmark

Ursula REUTER CHRISTIANSEN

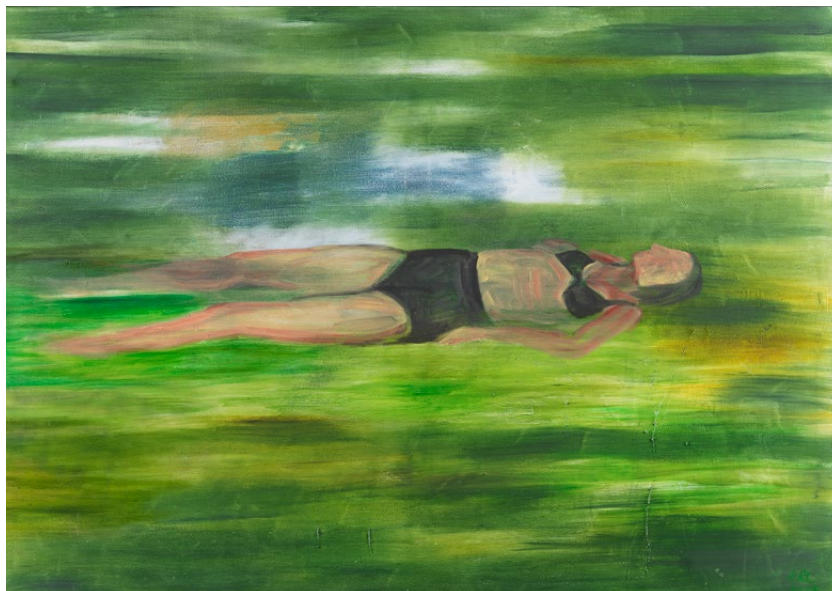
Floating I, Vernil Joengroen, 2005

Floating is a self-portrait in three parts where the present and the past, painting and philosophy, people and nature coalesce. Ursula Reuter Christiansen – easily recognisable with her long, dark hair and dressed in a two-piece bathing suit – is drifting along with the flow of the river.

The river is a recurring theme in her work. In *Sten i floden* (Stone in the River), her 2016 memoir, Ursula Reuter Christiansen describes her childhood on the banks of the Moselle in Trier, Germany, where she lived until she was seven. The river is associated with the land of childhood, closely interweaving memories of adventure and nature, magic and enchantment. These are the first of the many memories and experiences, the many stones, that fall into the river of life as it flows along.

Ursula Reuter Christiansen paints herself floating in the river in late 2005, at the age of 63, as she is about to leave her post as professor in Copenhagen. She can leave her teaching duties behind her and fall back into the essence of the painting, just as she slips into the water every day on the beach on Møn, almost effortlessly letting herself go, drifting with the flow.

She is floating in green. The colour green is often associated with nature, regeneration and renewal. Joseph Beuys, Ursula Reuter Christiansen's teacher at the academy in Düsseldorf, used it as a symbol of his political and environmental ideals. For her husband, Henning Christiansen, it was a symbol of nature, and he painted his ear green so he could listen to the earth.



© Ursula Reuter Christiansen / VISDA

Oil on canvas, 140 × 200 cm
SMK National Gallery of Denmark

Ursula REUTER CHRISTIANSEN

Floating II, Paul Veronergroen, 2005

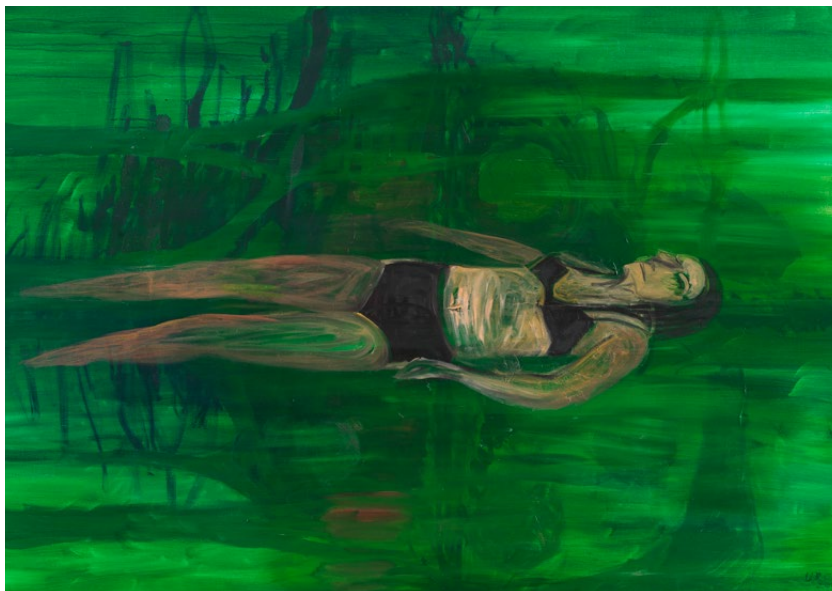
Ursula Reuter Christiansen floats from one green river of colour to the next. She drifts along in the physical and cultural stories of the material.

'Vernil Joengroen' is the subtitle of the first work. The colours of the painting are luminous, and the paint is applied in uniform, horizontal brushstrokes. The name 'Vernil' comes from the French, vert Nil (Nile green), a colour so difficult to describe that in reference works it varies between pale yellow green and bright emerald green.

She floats on in 'Paul Veronergroen', also known as Veronese green (Vert Paul Véronèse in French). In this second picture, a series of vertical, oblique brushstrokes give the impression of dark, rippling vegetation in the water. This colour has been produced since about the 18th century. The green found in the paintings of the Italian artist Paolo Veronese was not a colour but

rather a technique or combination of colours used by a large number of Renaissance painters in the 1400s. The technique involved applying copper resinate – green copper salts, turpentine and wax – over a lead white, lead-tin yellow and verdigris base. The word 'verdigris', which comes from the Old French 'verte grez' (green of Greece), is misleading because the colour – a green derived from copper corroded in vinegar – can actually be traced back to Ancient Egypt.

In the third painting, Ursula Reuter Christiansen is floating in Phthalo green. This is a synthetic organic colour based on a chemical structure: a phthalocyanine pigment made up of copper and chlorinated phthalocyanine. The colour, which can be both dark and light, is characterised by its high intensity and transparency. The painter floats from dark to light, with a few strident brushstrokes bringing ripples to the surface.



© Ursula Reuter Christiansen / VISDA

Oil on canvas, 140 × 200 cm
SMK National Gallery of Denmark

Ursula REUTER CHRISTIANSEN

Floating III, Pthalpgroen BLAUW, 2005

Water plays a central role in a number of Ursula Reuter Christiansen's works. In *Skarpretteren* (The Executioner), her early cinematic masterpiece, the seawater is a mirror in which the female protagonist sees reflections of life and death, with the sea forming both a physical boundary and an image of infinity. The water flows into feminist and archetypal notions of the cyclical connection between women and nature.

In recent eco-feminist thought, our deep connections with water have gained new philosophical perspectives. Hydrofeminism sees water as a fundamental, transformative force that binds all living things together across gender, nationalities and time.

Hydrofeminist thinkers draw attention to water's ability to move freely and unite different bodies and environments. They see the body as a unit filled with liquid that is connected to the water in nature, and emphasise how dependent our health and wellbeing are on the water cycle. This understanding pushes the traditional boundaries between nature and the body, and between different categories of people, by highlighting water's ability to transcend these boundaries. Hydrofeminism calls for solidarity between different bodies of water and stresses the importance of our shared responsibility for the state of water.

Although it is probably not intentional, Ursula Reuter Christiansen's floating images also bring this form of 'load-bearing capacity' to mind.



© Ursula Reuter Christiansen / VISDA

Oil on canvas, 140 × 200 cm
SMK National Gallery of Denmark

Christian SCHMIDT-RASMUSSEN

Langt om længe fandt menneskeheden en måde at overvinde døden
(At Long Last Mankind Found a Way to Conquer Death), 1998

While he was studying at the Danish Academy of Fine Arts between 1987 and 1992, Christian Schmidt-Rasmussen joined a number of other male students in a loose community based around the 'Baghuset' exhibition space. Theirs was a humorous, ironic community with a critical understanding of commercialism in the art world, and they referred to Baghuset as a gallery. They saw their pictures in the context of contemporary visual culture, i.e. mass-media images, advertising and images from the entertainment industry, rather than as the extension of an artistic tradition.

Schmidt-Rasmussen combines imagery from illustrations in children's books, comics and animated films with tired clichés from the romantic tradition of the past to create richly coloured, imaginative, left-field narratives with a political and socially critical sting in the tail. In the painting poetically entitled At Long Last Mankind Found a Way to Conquer Death, we see

the distant silhouette of a stag standing proudly, the master of the vast wild plains, watching the events unfolding in an ice-blue landscape. Here, Schmidt-Rasmussen is clearly referencing both the German artist Caspar David Friedrich's famous painting of the majesty and grandeur of nature in 1818's *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog* and Disney's classic film *The Lion King* from 1994.

Death is disguised as a surly snowman melting next to a smoking hot woodburning stove. It looks as though the threat and death are coming from the cold, but death's face can be seen grinning out from under the snowman's glower. The heat of the stove is melting the snow and ice to reveal flowers and grass amid the wintry landscape, and the stove is grinning in fiery tandem with Death. Into this tragi-comic scene comes man, portrayed as a clown, bringing wood for the fire.



Photo: SMK Photo/Jakob Skou-Hansen

Acrylic on canvas, 140 × 195 cm
SMK National Gallery of Denmark

Christian SCHMIDT-RASMUSSEN

Vi lever det ud (We are living it out), 2001

Narration and abstraction playfully intertwine in *We are living it out*, a work whose slogan-like title in Danish, *Vi lever det ud*, is painted into the image as a kind of concrete painting and concrete poetry. Concrete painting works with shapes, lines and colours as expressions, without seeking to portray something from the wider world, while one of the things that concrete poetry does is to work with words as a textual image.

The smooth, round graphics appeal to the eye straight away, but the text is almost illegible. 'Vi', the first word, and 'ud', the last word, are the easiest to make out, especially when our eyes instinctively follow the Western way of reading from left to right. This is why the 'Vi' at the top and the 'ud' at the bottom stand out. But what is going on in the middle is more difficult to

grasp: the letters and words are different sizes and lengths, and they overlap. The individual letters are broken up into different colours, with their fixed contours dissolving into a lush, wild rebus. The words in the middle – 'lever det' – are almost illegible, challenging and breaking down the clarity of context. We are ultimately faced with a number of messages that are both clear and unclear in a textual image that invites us to live it out – if, that is, we manage to decipher the message and act on it.

The concrete art – both the image and the poetry – creates its own cultural landscape that encourages the viewer to think about the connections between a shared 'we' and the body as a discrete entity, between the collective and the personal.



Photo: SMK Photo/Jakob Skov-Hansen

Acrylic on canvas, 160 × 140 cm
SMK National Gallery of Denmark

Christian SCHMIDT-RASMUSSEN

Ængstelsen (The Anxiety), 2015

In this painting of two halves, the landscape – the earth, the sky and the vegetation – is depicted as a splintered or pixellated image made up of a number of layers that are in the process of reconfiguring themselves like pieces trying to fall into place, or figurations looking to find a form.

The picture is the artist's vision of new beginnings, with a landscape that is free of humans. The humans have either disappeared or turned into something else. Perhaps they are the black shapes floating in two places in the painting, or maybe they have turned into deer? At any rate, we cannot see them. What we can see are a number of birds

and two deer that have come across one another in the countryside. Perhaps we are witnessing the first tender moments of love between the deer, a love so intense they are radiating light. Two birds, meeting in the sky, are also bathed in light. These events are attracting the attention of the other animals. Something is happening and something is changing. The earth is covered with a thin layer of snow, there are leaves on the trees, part of the image is disappearing into the crack between the two halves of the painting, and parts of the landscape look like they are crystallising. This is a new, unstable world full of anxiety and tremulous expectations.

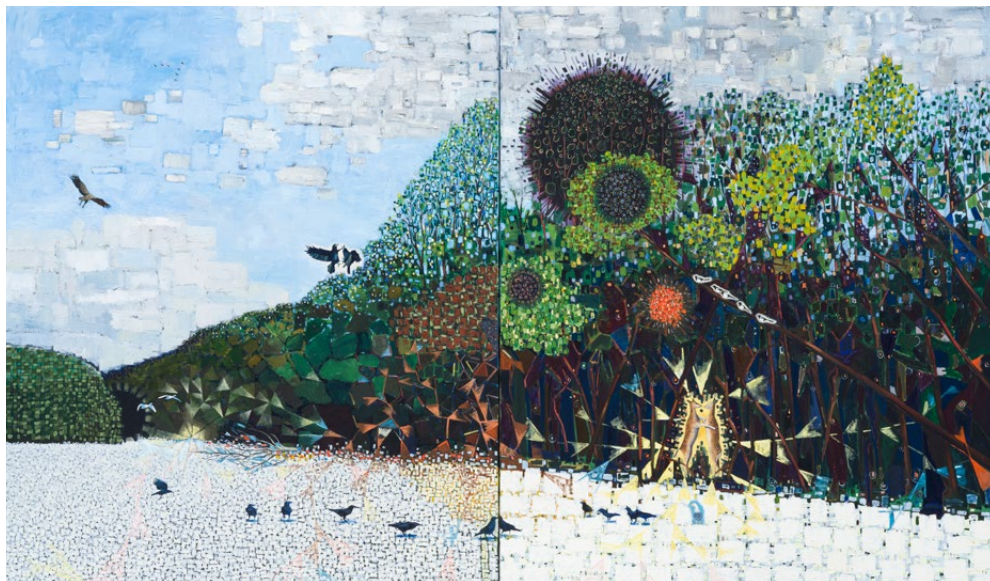


Photo: SMK Photo/Jakob Skou-Hansen

Oil on canvas, 200 × 340 cm
SMK National Gallery of Denmark

Troels WÖRSEL

Untitled, 2009

For centuries, the horse has occupied a special place in art. Perceptions of horses' natural characteristics, such as strength and speed, have paved the way for a host of contrasting symbolic meanings: the horse can be an expression of freedom, instinct and drive, but it can also be a tool that humans use in war, violence and control.

In this work by Wörsel, a valuable thoroughbred sporting an exclusive bridle strides nonchalantly through the picture, turning slightly away. It reminds us that the complex symbolism associated with horses is still relevant today – albeit in a new guise. Wörsel indirectly captures the social and political aspects of a reality alluded to by the image of the horse, which was based on an existing photograph. Most of all, however, he uses the image of the beautiful horse as a springboard for artistic expression, immersing himself in the very essence of the painting.

In a construction that is at once monumentally simple and complex, and built up over two composite canvases, the artist creates a beguiling interplay between the painting as an image of something and the painting as something to be seen in its own right. Wörsel is interested in how a painting is constructed and in the infinite possibilities inherent in the various forms of expression open to him. The artist delves deeply into the relationship between the figure and the background, drawing on motifs borrowed by pop art from popular culture and on the monochrome surfaces of minimalism, and he contrasts expressive, thick brushwork with the irregular geometric shapes on the constructively dynamic surface. Wörsel's technique reflects the dual meaning of the horse, moving between free expression and bridled submission.



Courtesy SMK and The Estate of Troels Wörstel

Acrylic on canvas, 240 × 400 cm
SMK National Gallery of Denmark

**DANISH ARTWORKS
PURCHASED IN 2025**

Jeannette EHLERS

Whip It Good, 2016

Jeannette Ehlers (b. 1973) is a Copenhagen-based artist of Danish and Trinidadian descent, well established in both the Danish and international contemporary art scenes. Her practice includes experiments across photography, video, installation, sculpture and performance, often addressing questions around memory, race and colonialism from a transnational perspective on topics that are relevant to the broader Black diaspora.

Whip It Good is a photographic piece connected to Ehlers' performance of the same name, which is based on whipping, one of the brutal methods of punishment used against slaves. *Whip It Good* was first performed in 2013 in Berlin at BE.BOP13 and has since travelled worldwide. This photographic still is from a performance in New Orleans in 2016.

In the performance, the artist transforms the whip into a painting brush, rubbed with black charcoal, which is hit against a white canvas in a rhythmic and ritualistic gesture. The whip is first used by the artist, and is later offered to the participants. This ritual re-enacts the brutality of the transatlantic slave trade, while also transforming the body and the canvas into a series of questions and symbols.

The powerful imagery of *Whip It Good* results from Ehlers' effort to critically reimagine and challenge racist systems of power and domination in everyday urban and social settings, and is connected to the tradition of what theorist Uri McMillan described as 'performing objecthood'. This tradition, observable in the work of many artists of colour, focuses on the use by the artist of their racialised body as a means of social critique, and as a subject with agency and artistry.



Photo: Kim Coleman & Bjarke Johansen

Ed. 1 of 5, Photography, 75 × 75 cm
European Parliament Contemporary Art Collection

Tove STORCH

Untitled, 2022

The artistic practice of Tove Storch (b. 1981) is a continuous exploration of sculpture's potential, rooted in both research and sensory experience. She creates sensuous, often surprising forms that experiment with materials and their interaction with space and the viewer. Her focus lies in the nature and limits of materials – how they can be transformed and presented in unexpected ways.

Rather than overwhelming the viewer, Storch invites them to slow down and notice subtle sensations and details. Many of her floor pieces reflect their surroundings and encourage mindfulness, emphasising presence and awareness.

This artwork is part of a broader series that blurs the line between sculpture and architecture. Using transparent materials – primarily a specific kind of

silk – Storch creates spatial forms that explore perception. The piece also belongs to her 'pink period', during which she focused intensely on the colour pink and its associations with the body, femininity and sexuality. In this work, pink translucent silk is woven in unconventional ways and stretched across dark metallic surfaces, creating a dynamic interplay between softness and rigidity. Light and positioning reveal constantly shifting visual effects and tensions.

This contrast of materials symbolises a broader exploration of gender, embodiment and emotional complexity – love, violence and care. By combining the tactile with the conceptual, Storch distances her work from traditional sculpture, allowing the materials to 'speak' in their own language. Naming her works 'Untitled' is a deliberate choice made to remove preconceptions, centring attention solely on the material, sensory experience and visual language of the artwork itself.



Photo: Malle Madsen

Metal, textile, 246 × 84 × 64 cm
European Parliament Contemporary Art Collection

**A R T I S T S '
P A R L I A M E N T**

SUPERFLEX

One Two Three Swing!, 2017

One Two Three Swing! is an installation of interconnected swings suspended from orange steel frames. As the artwork is installed around the world, it creates connections between disparate places, cultures and climates — from urban centres and deserts to conflict zones and private homes. To date, installations have been placed in London, Antwerp, AlUla in Saudi Arabia, the Korean Demilitarised Zone, Bonn and various sites in Denmark. With each new installation, these connections grow.

The swings act as human-powered pendulums, converting potential energy into shared movement. While swings are ordinarily meant for individual use, in this work each swing can seat up to three people. Those on the swing must collectively use the force of gravity, building momentum until the moment when falling becomes flying and everyone moves together. In this playful moment, the energy of collective movement is released. A plaque on the underside of the seat suggests that, if enough people swing together, the collective power produced might change the trajectory of the Earth.

Installed in the Artists' Parliament in a unique circular formation, *One Two Three Swing!* is a place to sit, contemplate, gather and come face to face with others — including those with whom you might not necessarily agree. It invites the audience to explore the power of play and the possibilities of collaboration — and collaboration always involves accepting friction. The shared experience offered by the work may inspire reflection on broader issues such as democracy, collective action and social connectivity. In this sense, SUPERFLEX's swings are more than just an opportunity for play; they are an experiment in activating collective energy — energy that can perhaps be channelled to change the course of the planet and our path as a society.



Photo: Alexis HAULOT, © European Union 2025 - Source : EP

Metal, Dimension variable
Courtesy of authors

BIOGRAPHIES

Lene ADLER PETERSEN

Lene Adler Petersen was born in Aarhus in 1944. She studied and practised at Det Jyske Kunstakademi (The Jutland Art Academy) (1964–1966) and later at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts (1968–1969). While pursuing her studies, she was already a steady fixture in the experimental art scene in Copenhagen forming around Eks-Skolen (an artist-run alternative art school started in the 1960s by Bjørn Nørgaard, Per Kirkeby and Poul Gernes among others). At the time, Petersen gave her rebellious counter-examples artistic expression as a film-maker, painter and collage artist. A couple of performances that attracted considerable media attention during this period were *Female Jesus* (1969) and *Horse Sacrifice* (1970). The former involved Petersen running naked through the Copenhagen stock exchange. The latter involved her and her partner, Bjørn Nørgaard, slaughtering a horse in a field, carving up its carcass and preserving the cut up meat in jam jars.

Regardless of the medium, the artist seemed to flourish primarily through collaboration and took part in many collaborative initiatives in the Danish art community. This appetite for artistic dialogue is apparent in the number of groups she has been part of: ABCinema, Eks-skolens Trykkeri (Eks-Skolen's Printing House, Tidsskriftet Kvinder and Arme and Ben. Today, as a member of the Danish artists' association Kammeraterne (to which she was admitted in 1995), she continues to fulfil that instinct, albeit to a lesser extent.

Through her variety of work in different artistic mediums, Petersen has politically examined the contemporary representation of women. In addition to offering artistic readings and exploring alternatives, the artist experimented with tangible socio-economic models in the 1970s, during which she was one of the leaders in an action occupying and inhabiting the island of Livø, in order to pursue an alternative, meaningful way of working and living. Alternative models also governed the founding and operating of Eks-Skolens Trykkeri (Eks-Skolen's Printing House), which is still running, is still owned by the workers and continues to be a satellite venture to her artistic endeavours and those of her husband Bjørn Nørgaard.

By looking into the role of subjectivity and personal history and occupying a unique artistic position that challenges conventional paradigms of gender, female representation and artistic production, Lene Adler Petersen has, unsurprisingly, significantly influenced a generation of younger Danish artists by paving the way for the making of conceptual and feminist art in Scandinavia.

Nanna HERTOFT

Nanna Hertoft was born in Frederiksberg in 1936. Coming from an artistically oriented family (her parents are the artists Henry and Mille Heerup), she grew up in a nurturing environment that stimulated her natural interest in artistic forms of expression. This allowed her to learn many important lessons. She acquired first-hand technical knowledge and had access to quality material and tools, but at the same time experienced the financial difficulties and the precariousness which is often inevitable when choosing this professional activity and lifestyle. This made Hertoft very aware of the challenges involved, and clearly had an impact on her own artistic journey. In this nonetheless privileged and enriching environment, she crossed paths with some of the seminal names of the Danish Cobra movement, such as Egill Jacobsen, Asger Jorn, Sonja Ferlov Mancoba, Else Alfelt and Carl-Henning Pedersen.

In spite of the knowledge and appreciation she had for her father's art, and unlike her brother Ole Heerup who further developed their paternal heritage, Nanna Hertoft followed in her mother's footsteps, taking up picture weaving. Specifically, she adopted her mother's controversial but unique template-less technique, which eschewed the traditional approach. The advantages of working in this free manner are that the motifs, forms and landscapes are entirely intuitive, improvised, natural, organic and therefore representative of their weaver. Her personal style made its debut at the Artists' Autumn

Exhibition 1960. Since then, Hertoft has developed her own lyrical abstraction, expanding into large independent formats that can, if displayed together, be perceived as fragments of a larger coherent whole.

Visually and technically, Hertoft has stayed true to her surroundings, using colours typical of the Nordic vernacular, all naturally sourced in local plants, and used to dye materials such as wool, cotton or linen. Keen to promote her culture and put it in the spotlight, she joined the Colourists in 1972, an association which opened many doors. In 1989, she was made chairperson of the association, using this opportunity to create a positive dynamic through collaborations, exhibitions and publications. Her knowledge of Denmark's cultural infrastructure, financial opportunities (foundations and grants) and her extensive network in the Nordic countries have been crucial to her success.

Nanna Hertoft's double commitment as a textile and visual artist has led her to occupy a number of positions of trust, including in various committees, the Danish Crafts Council 1978-1984, the Statens Kunstfond (Danish Arts Foundation) committee for arts and crafts 1981-1983, the Academy Council 1990-1994 and from 1996 the Board of Representatives of the Statens Kunstfond. She has received several scholarships and honours, including the Eckersberg Medal in 1987, the Tagea Brandt Travel Scholarship in 1991 and the Anne Marie Telmányis Scholarship in 1995.

Bjørn NØRGAARD

Bjørn Nørgaard (b. 1947) lives and works in Copenhagen and on the island of Møn. He started out back in 1963 as part of Denmark's inspiring School of Experimental Art. Nørgaard has worked with happenings, actions, objects, comics, collective films, painting, sculpture, magazines, books, demonstrations, posters, printing and even chamber opera. The School of Experimental Art aligned itself with other international avant-garde movements. The radical, innovative German artist Joseph Beuys was a particular influence for Nørgaard. His early works and actions were highly provocative and at odds with the norms of the time, but they were also characteristic of the new wave of Danish art in the years concerned. Several of his early actions had a distinctly religious flavour. In *Den kvindelige Kristus* (The Female Christ), for example, Nørgaard's partner Lene Adler Petersen walked naked through Copenhagen's stock exchange, as a cross-bearing female Christ.

Since the mid-1970s, Nørgaard has become an increasingly influential figure in Danish art in the area of monumental art projects. Two projects in particular stand out. First, the 11 large tapestries depicting scenes from Denmark's history from the Vikings right into the future, which were made for Queen

Margrethe and adorn the Great Hall at Christiansborg Palace. And second, the Bispebjerg Bakke residential complex in Copenhagen, a playful, visionary architectural project started in 2004 and completed 2007, with an emphasis on natural materials, high-quality craftsmanship, organic forms and sensory impressions.

Nørgaard's works feature in numerous public collections in Denmark and beyond, including ARoS, the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, the SMK National Gallery of Denmark, the Kunsthalle zu Kiel in Germany, the Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter in Norway, the Museum voor Hedendaagse Kunst in the Netherlands, Moderna Museet in Sweden and the Kunstmuseum Luzern in Switzerland.

Ursula REUTER CHRISTIANSEN

Ursula Reuter Christiansen (b. 1943) lives and works on the island of Møn in southern Denmark. She came to Denmark from Germany in 1960 after studying with the legendary German artist Joseph Beuys at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf. Through her marriage to Henning Christiansen (1932-2008), a composer and member of the Fluxus movement, Ursula Reuter Christiansen became part of the Danish experimental art scene. She was also active in the feminist avant-garde.

In 1970, together with Lene Adler Petersen and Elisabeth Therkelsen, she made the film *Tre piger og en gris* (Three Girls and a Pig), one of the most important feminist works in Denmark of that time. The following year, 1971, she wrote, directed and played the lead role in *Skarpretteren* (The Executioner), a surreal fantasy film that took a more autobiographical turn. Expressive and narrative forms are writ large in Ursula Reuter Christiansen's work, be it painting, sculpture, performance, film or ceramics, with her personal life – memory, identity and gender – being a constant and clearly defined starting point.

Ursula Reuter Christiansen was a professor at the University of Fine Arts in Hamburg from 1992 to 1997. She then became the first female professor of painting at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen from 1997 to 2006. In 2001, together with Henning Christiansen, she represented Denmark at the Venice Biennale. Many of her works feature in numerous collections internationally and in Denmark in particular, including AROS, Museum Jorn, the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art and SMK National Gallery of Denmark.

Christian SCHMIDT-RASMUSSEN

Christian Schmidt-Rasmussen (b. 1963) lives and works in Copenhagen. His artistic output includes painting, installations and writing, and no matter which of these forms of expression he uses, his art is closely linked to language and the poetic dimension.

Schmidt-Rasmussen's work is narrative and playfully moves between the autobiographical and the universally existential. He lives in Sydhavnen, a former port area of Copenhagen that adjoins Sydhavstippen, a cultural landscape area. These surroundings play an enduring and important role in the issues and subjects he interprets on canvas, in manuscripts, in theatrical performances and, most recently, in the decoration of the Mozarts Plads metro station in Sydhavnen.

Christian Schmidt-Rasmussen studied at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts from 1986 to 1992 and was an associate professor at the Jutland Art Academy from 1998 to 2004. Since the 1990s, he has participated in solo and group exhibitions both in Denmark and abroad, and he is also represented in public collections both nationally and internationally.

Troels WÖRSEL

Troels Wörsel (1950–2018) was born in Aarhus, Denmark. When he was 24 he moved to Germany – first to Munich and then to Cologne, where he became a major figure on the international art scene. After 1997, he lived and worked between Pietrasanta in Italy and Cologne in Germany. He played an important role in the Scandinavian and European art scene until he died, far too young, in 2018.

As a painter, Wörsel was particularly inspired by the new American art movements of the 1960s and 1970s, and by the conceptual and formal issues involved in painting. He removed and worked up fragments of images, then placed them back onto the surface of his pictures. His works are generally characterised by various experiments in execution, ranging from the random, uncontrolled application of paint using an electric drill to controlled compositions in which strict geometric patterns incorporate both personal images and found ones.

Troels Wörsel's works feature in several prominent public collections around the world, including AROS, the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art and SMK National Gallery of Denmark; Kiasma in Finland; the Musée National d'Art Moderne at the Centre Pompidou in France; the Lenbachhaus in Germany; the National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design in Norway; Moderna Museet and the Nordic Watercolour Museum in Sweden; and MoMA in the United States.

Jeannette EHLERS

Jeannette Ehlers (b. 1973) is a Danish-Trinidadian artist based in Copenhagen, whose interdisciplinary practice critically engages with memory, race, colonialism and the African diaspora. Since graduating from The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in 2006, Ehlers has worked experimentally across photography, video, installation, sculpture and performance. Her art serves as a tool for decolonial disruption and historical reckoning, often incorporating self-representation and digital manipulation to reveal suppressed narratives and confront the legacies of Denmark's colonial past in the Caribbean, and its role in the transatlantic slave trade.

Ehlers merges personal and collective histories, combining the familial, poetic and bodily with the political, rebellious and historical. Her works are what she calls 'resistance pieces', embodying a strong drive toward empowerment and healing through honouring legacies of both tradition and defiance. As writer Lesley-Ann Brown notes, Ehlers 'reminds everyone who participates in or looks at her work that history is not past'.

One of her most renowned projects is the monumental public sculpture *I Am Queen Mary* (2018), co-created with artist La Vaughn Belle. It is the first public statue of a Black woman in Denmark and commemorates Mary Thomas, a leader of the 1878 labour revolt on St Croix. The work stands as a bold intervention in public space and historical narrative, exemplifying Ehlers' commitment to visibility and justice.

Ehlers has participated in numerous international exhibitions and residencies, including at the 18th Street Arts Center (United States), Triangle Arts (United States) and PROGR (Switzerland), expanding her transnational lens on colonial and diasporic themes. Her recent exhibitions include *Crossing Waters: Ripples of Tomorrow* at Le Bicolore (2024), *Diasporic Frequencies* at Rønnebæksholm (2023), *Archives in the Tongue: A Litany of Freedoms* at Kunsthall Charlottenborg (2022) and *Take Root* at the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit (2021).

Her work is held in major public and private collections such as the National Museum of Photography (Denmark), the Danish Arts Foundation, the Gothenburg Museum of Art (Sweden), and the Saastamoinen Foundation (Finland). She was also one of the artists shortlisted to produce a national monument to the Windrush Generation in London (2021) and a decolonial monument in Braunschweig, Germany (2023).

Through her deeply researched and emotionally resonant practice, Ehlers challenges dominant historical narratives, brings marginalised voices to the fore and contributes significantly to contemporary global discourses on identity, colonialism and resistance.

Tove STORCH

Tove Storch (b. 1981) is a Danish artist based in Copenhagen. She graduated from the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in 2007, following studies at the Akademie der bildenden Künste in Vienna (2004) and the Weißensee Kunsthochschule Berlin (2006). Her international academic background reflects a deliberate pursuit of diverse artistic traditions, informing her distinctive sculptural practice.

Storch's work is rooted in a deep investigation of materiality, form and spatial perception. Her sculptures often explore the tension between fragility and solidity, combining materials such as silk, metal, concrete, paper, and more recently, glass and soap. With these, she constructs minimalistic yet sensuous compositions that challenge conventional notions of sculpture. Her practice emphasises process and the physical properties of materials, leading to works that simultaneously appear delicate and forceful, structured and ephemeral.

Central to her approach is the interaction between material and space. Storch's works frequently engage the viewer's body and perception, subtly altering how space is felt and understood. Her sculptures are not merely objects, but experiences – inviting contemplation on form, presence and the ever-shifting boundary between the seen and the sensed. Through this, she poses fundamental questions about the nature of sculpture in contemporary society.

Her artistic achievements have earned her several prestigious recognitions, including the Carl Nielsen and Anne Marie Carl-Nielsen Prize of Honour and a three-year working grant from the Danish Arts Foundation.

Storch's work is held in major public collections such as the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art (Denmark), Malmö Museum of Art (Sweden), the Phillips Collection (Washington DC) and S.M.A.K. (Belgium), reflecting her significance on the international stage. Her recent exhibitions – *Slumping* (Gammel Strand, Copenhagen, 2023–2024), *Glassy Eyes* (Glas: The Museum of Glass Art, Aarhus, 2024–2025) and *Lasheses* (Gallery of Contemporary Art and Architecture, České Budějovice, Czechia, 2025) – highlight a focused engagement with glass as a medium. This marks a new chapter in her evolving practice, where the transformation, transparency and fragility of glass echo her long-standing themes of material duality and sensory experience.

Through an ever-refined vocabulary of materials and form, Storch continues to develop a body of work that is at once rigorous and poetic, challenging the viewer to reconsider the boundaries of sculpture and the subtleties of perception.

I M P R I N T

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Curator:

Cultural Outreach Unit, Directorate-General for Communication /
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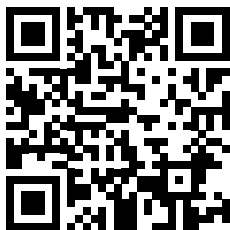
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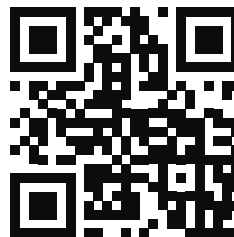
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