



**FLESH GARDENS**  
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**MFA Critical Reflection 2022**

**Trondheim Academy of Fine Art**  
**Faculty of Architecture and Design**  
**University of Science and Technology**



In this project I have made work that will be shown in Gallery KiT, Kjøpmansgata ung kunst (K.U.K) and Nils Aas kunstverksted (NAAK) as part of our Master of Fine Art Graduation show, "Into the Pink Sun". This is a painting and sculptural project that dabbles in ecofeminist research. My focus is making cool paintings, but also to understand more of the society we are born into and and if successful maybe a small practise of empathy. In this paper I will give you a run down of what I have been through, and I will point you to the research I have scraped the surface on.



I find myself in a flourishing garden of fat, skin, rape, and jealousy. It is tainted in a brownish red coat. The flowers sweat greed and the grass wants to eat me. Shouldn't I feel more strongly about this strange place, isn't it utterly wrong to create a community based on these plants? The soil is rich, it calms you. You know that no harm could ever happen here, we're finally safe. We see the black bird in the sky and the dandelion on the ground. I hear the melody of blood and I ask myself - how did I end up here?

Oh honey. Time is not a line, the reason we still gullible enough think so is because the Christians used their whole budget on propaganda. It's not a circle either though, like your buzzed out hippie parents where always jabbering about. No. It's a spiral. You might laugh and tell me that of course it's is, all twilights are forgotten jungle nights, but is it a linear spiral or a circular one? Is time coiled up like our DNA or is it going round and round and forever like a lost plastic hair tie?

Let's humour the goddess of time. Let's say there's a sequential narrative here. Let's say there's a continuous story here, and you just didn't materialize here and now.  
Let's play.

Historically speaking, has the sexes always been at war? Man hates women, and why wouldn't he? Wombmen – there's always annoying when functional objects gain consciousness. Nobody likes when the wart under your foot start singing or when your dishwasher suddenly realizes that it wants to pillow talk and take control over your life, and kill you while you're sleeping.

You find yourself on a stage, at first you believe in it. The actors are dancing around a group claiming that they are in a play. You might feel confused, maybe they are the only actors? The stage dissolves into reality and the the pig faced lady hands you a beer. She needs to marry you. I'm unsure if we should do that. Your partner flies away with her on a white dragon. Later he tells me that she was cursed. He's a good guy- He told her that she should decide if he should look at her as a swine for the rest of their lives, or if the world should see her as one.

There's no sequence tough, we are all here in this single moment.

We are not responsible of what the spirits that previously moved our lips said. Speaking of words, did you know that "Pig" and "Dog" are the most common insults in the Bible? Most of the swine related phrases we have today, like "he's a pig", stems from slurs to put down the jews in Europe. This is an old tradition of alienating our fellow human beings by compare them with the animals that we put into small cells, torture and then after they done their use, slaughter.

We might think that modern swine-production is a perverse exception in the scope of time, but bizarre abuse is the rule. In ancient Rome you would starve your pig, then feed it dried figs. The stupid mammal would of

course eat them too fast and too many and it was still thirsty, so you gave it honey-wine.  
The figs swell up in the pig-stomach and the weakened liver would take a serious hit.  
The next time you came back the pig had stopped breathing and you could start with the cooking.

While we're still judging the Mediterranean, let's talk about the aesthetic of fascism: Minimalism. Why is it this aesthetic Scandinavians have chosen to put their love on? It can't be for its original purpose, right? Fearful power moves that would make the individual bow their head for the big leader. Has the aesthetic surpassed its starting point or is just a coincidence that it lends itself to the same visual communication.

So how did I, a Scandinavian woman born in the year of the pig, end up here in this mess?  
Am I supposed to navigate these problems that others have laid out in lost jungle nights?  
Why can't I just paint the flowers? No, because that would only be a painting, a work. We're here to make work of art.

What is art? The status quo in this time and place is that "Art is anything an artist claims to be art". The question is not what is art, it's who is an artist? Anyone who claims to be.

– but why would I respect your claim? As empowering as it might seem, this quote strips away all the power from the artist and right in the hand of the patron.

The viewer.

I don't see you as an artist, therefore your work is just a mere object, in an overfilled world.

Being an artist shares similarities with being a woman. You're just trying to make the best out of being born into the role someone else wrote and at the same time, you might be freer than the free man, within your cell.

Magic is a female trait. It's the same idea as "female intuition" and so on. We are living in a story where women are more primitive and closer to nature. Therefore, they don't have to understand (science) anything, they can feel (magic) it. Let's be real: Making art about magic is a bit tacky. Why so?

Same reason that making political art is cringy, why textile wasn't a fine art for centuries: It's not on the agenda. Our current agenda was written through modernism and enforced the idea that art shouldn't be an illusion. We're done with mysteries. I only want what I know. Any questions?

Remember though, time is a spiral.

You just materialized here now.

Soon someone else will carry on with your face and nails.

This fever dream is just a transcription of a moment of clarity in a tired head. This is written from one place in the DNA by a particular allele, it hasn't spoken with its counterpart. The other I's, can look at this, but we will never be it.

So, in a hubris and humble act of trying to understand each other's realities we're sending artifacts through time, as a desperate shout in the dark to hopefully reach other lifeforms in this void.

## THE HANGOVER

But for real though, how did I end up here?

A conflict that is present in art discussions and in the back of my head is the constructed contradiction between concept and craft. This has led to me having a broad and often misleading portfolio. When I entered this school as a BFA1 in 2017 I was highly conceptual and academic orientated as I was excited about the possibility to combine my two loves, knowledge and art. During my first year I did the project "[Midlife Crisis and the Art of Box Car Building](#)" which I believe could be a fruitful entry point for understanding what I'm doing now. In short, the project was an installation and pseudo-science based research where I claimed that the perceived middle of a life (if you live 80 years) is 22. Therefore, I staged my own midlife crisis and acted out midlife crisis clichés, but since I haven't lived my 20s I had to idealize my childhood. So instead of buying a Lamborghini, I built a box car - and so on.

After the project I got fed up with this style of working, I found that I was moving away from the reason I wanted to be an artist: drawing. I discarded my intellectual approach and started making more intuitive works. When I started this master I therefore didn't know what central question this project should be about.



Stills from *Midlife Crisis* and *the Art of Box Car Building*

To become a good, or at least better painter. That is an ambitious goal for a lifetime I would say. Still, I wanted to bring back the more idea driven side of me as well in this MFA.

During this master I have chosen to have my focus on painting. I feel most comfortable with still lifes. The task of simplifying and translate real objects onto the canvas is a process I find both joy and self-confidence. The thing that drew me into pictures from childhood on was the worldbuilding and storytelling aspect though. I have always found stories to be the most reward way to looking at reality and life. But how to do that in a painting? I find painting and drawing to be quite different ways of understanding. They are different ways of entering a way of making an image, but they also want different things from you. Unlike making still lifes I find painting from imagination to be quite tricky.

I'm experimenting with size, different levels of completeness. I want to find my "style" and cultivate it fur-



Blomsterbukett



Potion

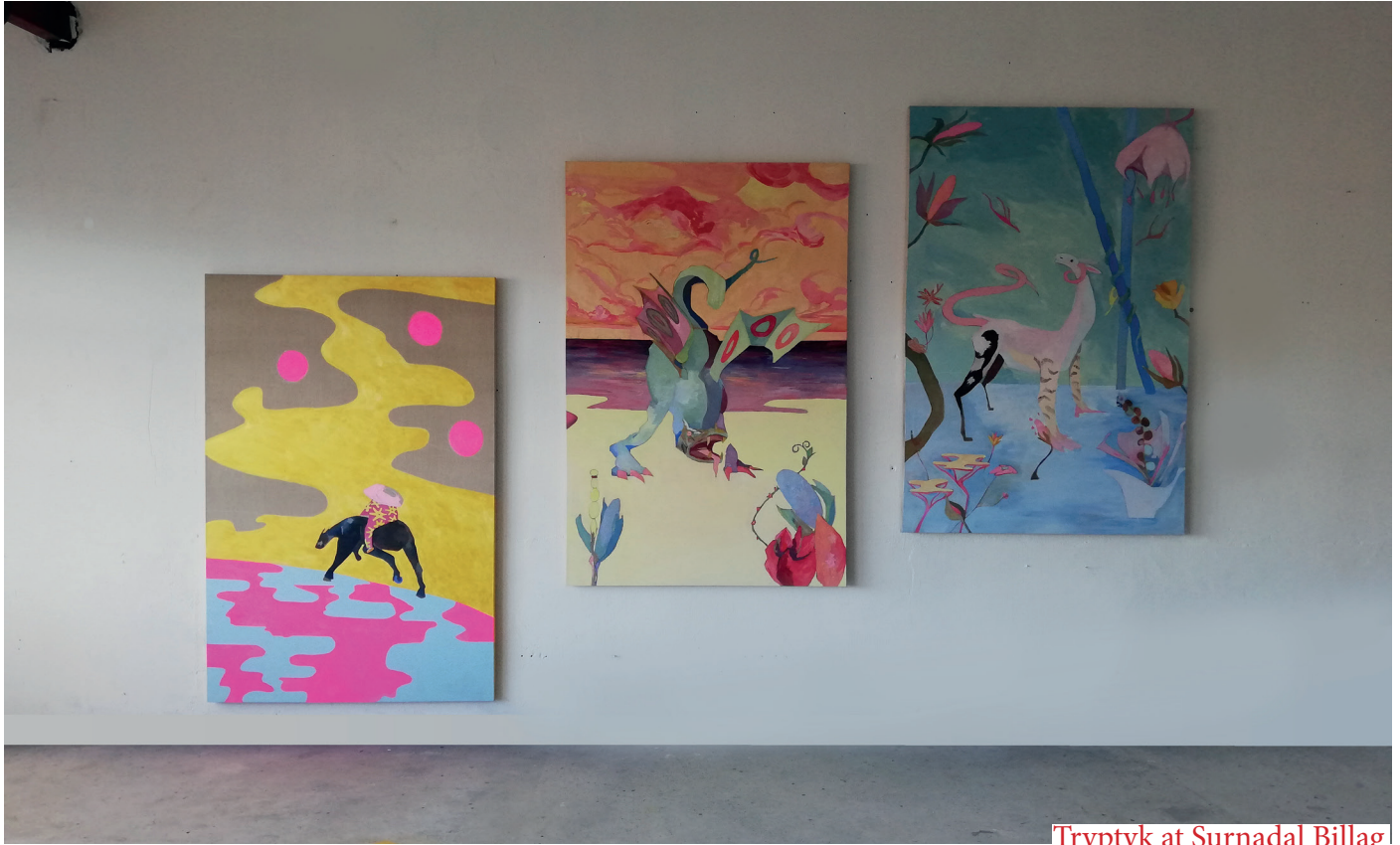
her. It's been a bumpy ride and it will probably become even more confusing with time. But this master is a starting point.

When going up in size I discovered something odd – the paintings become more like drawings, defined. Especially in my tryptyk series where I focused on creatures from old famous artworks. Which in a way was



a relief, I could still control the overall image even if the image was bigger than me, on the other hand: They wasn't as free. The paintings reflect my lack of confidence.

I got the opportunity to work further on my "🌈Paint" series, which I started as my final bachelor project in 2020. Through a KUNO course I got to make 2 more weaves in 2021, one for the 🌈Paint project and one for my series "Man is a germ" which is a series of drawings I started on in 2015. I got the honour of showing my 3 weaves in the KUNO biennale trial "This is my dream" at EKA the art academy in Tallinn



Tryptyk at Surnadal Billag

In another technique, but still within the 🌈Paint project I did make a lot of sublimation prints during my BFA, during this MFA I have experimented with different ways of showing them. In our class show SHED they hanged in a shed under renovation and in the exhibitions Epoché and SEX in Gallery KiT I played with more spacial hangings.



Weaves at the KUNO bienale trial



SEX show





Epoché



SHED

WHIPLASH

SO where do all these pigs come into picture?

Honestly, as most om my ideas, whether it starts visually or conceptual, it just made sense in the moment. All my data and research in this thesis is post-rationalization of that thought. The closest I have been able to communicate the idea is the story you already read. *However, I summarize it simply:*

KVINNER  
GRISER  
VOLD  
TID  
BLOMSTER

WOMEN  
PIGS  
VIOLENCE  
TIME  
FLOWERS

Turns out that the connection between meat and gender has been a feministic topic of discussion for a long time. As I`m reading Meat Culture it`s easy to see that I`m also part of the anthropocentric mind that ecofeminism fights. In a way painting dead and disfigured animals, strips a way their individuality. When you see slaughtered pigs, you get that they have been killed, but you start seeing them more as meat than animals. This is also done in the real slaughter, heads and other "personal traits" usually gets removed quite early in the process. Maybe because we as meat consumers do not to see our food as both living subjects and our



future dinner anymore? Animals is our happy friends who runs around on the green grass on TV and food is those square formed meat bricks we buy. It`s two dimensions which can`t co-exist in the modern stomach. Sort of like it`s been through history difficult to see women as both intellects and givers of birth at the same time.

Let`s be even more egocentric for a while. Why pigs?

Because both through a “general” human lens and my personal one I find them to be the most interesting animal we have in our society. Myself first, I was born in 1995. The year of the wooden pig. As a bacteriophobic child I found this to be an utterly horrendous fact. We never believed in horoscopes in my family, but my parents found joy them it regardless. They would tell me that in Chinese traditions being born a pig was amazing: pigs are honest, smart and good with money. I cried. Pigs are so ugly and dirty\*! I don`t want to be that. Here we might see the best explanation for my motivation behind this project, why did I think so little of pigs? No disgust is the right wording. I was a small child, and the objectification of my own self have already started. I wanted to be beautiful, not fat, ugly and greedy.

On my “general objective” level I find the pig to be fascinating because we are so different and yet, share important qualities. It`s inside pigs we plan to grow new human organs. Scientist are starting slowly to test out merging parts of the human genom with pig DNA to make them better organ growers. This is highly debated in the scientific environment, since we do not know ethical complications yet. This could become problematic and on the other hand, this could help alot of people. Many have been worried about the effect in the pigs brain if we share our hereditary material, what if the pigs also started to grow human consciousness?

Pigs are smart, curious, and social. Despite that, it`s the animal that we don`t want to talk about. As Kristoffer Hatteland Endresen points out in his book “Litt som oss” (A bit like us), the pig is the farm animal in Norway you never spot while you are driving through the landscape. They`re hidden away.

The first human drawing we know of depicts a pig. It`s the oldest cave painting ever found, dating 43 900 years back. In both roman and Nordic folklore, the pig was a symbol of fertility. Not surprising, considering that they have the longest orgasm found in mammals. The Norse goddess of love, fertility, and battle: Freja, rode a boar with golden bristles. Pigs where sacred for her. In the ancient Greece young swines was called “Khoros” or “Delphax” which also could be used to describe female genitalia. The roman word “porcus” which in addition for meaning swine also referred to young females who had reached sexually mature age.

We use pigs to produce meat.

We use women to produce babies.

We want women for their meat.

We want to grow organs in pigs.

As Kate Millet points out, in earlier religions made up by people who were hunters and gatherers, praising the female body was quite common. This seems to shift when we started with agriculture. Her theory to why this is, is that women was in the centre of the community – they were the givers of life. In modern farming men are taking on the power of reproduction themselves. Through taking over the animals` sex life, the mystery of life loses its...well mystery. Paving the way for seeing women as mere “baking” instruments.

“I will greatly multiply  
Your pain in childbirth,  
In pain you will bring forth children.  
Yet your desire will be for your husband,  
And he will rule over you.”

- Genesis 3:16

*\*Pigs are when allowed the opportunity, hygienic animals that does not roll in feces – as many believe they do. In “nature” they do roll in mud to cool them selves down, since they cannot sweat.*

## DOING THE THING

I decided to paint 4 big paintings for the show in Gallery KiT + 2 smaller that will be shown at K.U.K and NAK. I'm also planning to make sculptures depicting whole and disfigured parts of slaughter pigs that will lay and hang in the gallery spaces. The plan is to make the sculptures in April. I made some small models to visualize the idea in December.

The painting process has been as difficult as one could expect, however I have had a steady pace. I'm next to finished with all of them and feel confident that this is the best I can do now. I have focused on having a light colour palette, I want the images to feel as they have an inner light. I have gotten the critique that they feel uneven. both within themselves and in relation to one another, which I do see. In my mind they come from the same place, even though they might be confused.

My most direct source for visual inspiration within this project is

the slaughtered bodies of the pigs. My brother and photographer, Fartein Rudjord, sent me some striking images from a slaughterhouse he took some years ago. As inspiration goes, I also wanted to mention Hieronymus Bosch as one of the more direct artist inspiration sources. I have also been thinking a lot about Georgia O'Keeffe, Claude Monet, and Edvard Munch. From Bosch I have been inspired by his intense and detailed storytelling and I admire vivid imagination. You can say for sure that my images are the opposite, they're painted with a wide brush and ignore detail - Still, I'm influenced by the emotions he left on the canvas. I have left some quite open hints to his work in mine. The three others have mainly inspired me in terms of "inner light" in the painting and way of using the brush strokes and how to simplify the motif. I also let myself get inspired by the moods and rules I pick up in the fictional books I hear and read parallelly. It's not traces I easily can point to, but I believe that do leave their marks. I will add my reading list in the end of the text.

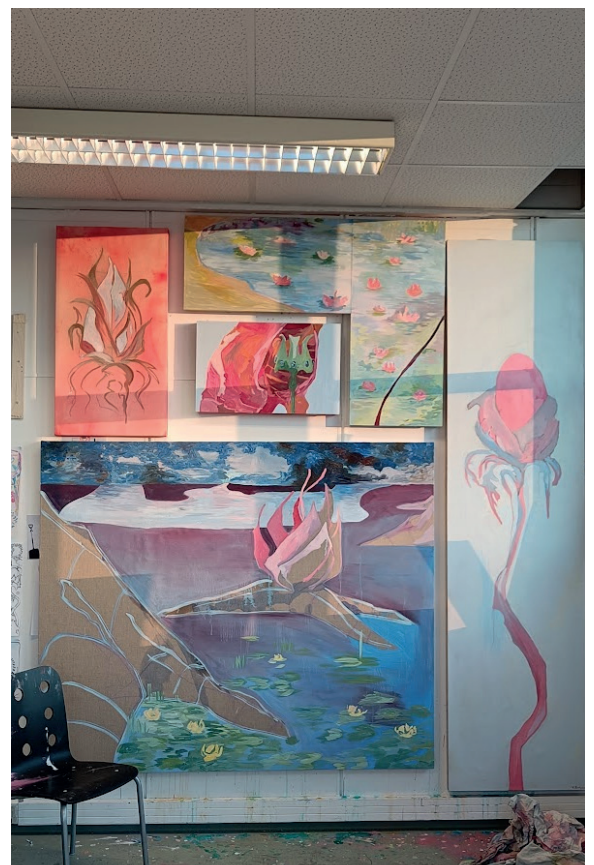
I choose to construct the flower painting as a comic book page with different panels. I think of this as nod to my love for the graphic novel as a form. I was planning to have more comic book inspired elements in the installation, walls with holes to look through and lots of smaller paintings - to give room for more interpretations of the gender/meat conflict and to give you the feeling of walking into a story.

I decided to simplify my idea. I realised that this project and the "graphic novel" installation is stronger divided. Therefore, I won't have that many perspectives on female pigs and edible women - but I hope that the overall room will have a greater impact when the different elements has more room to shine. On the other hand my supervisor suggested that I would paint the walls in the gallery, since my paintings already are loud and demanding. I like that idea, earlier this school year I looked alot at Andreas Siqueland show "Hole in the Woods" at LNM

- maybe make murals instead of sculptures?

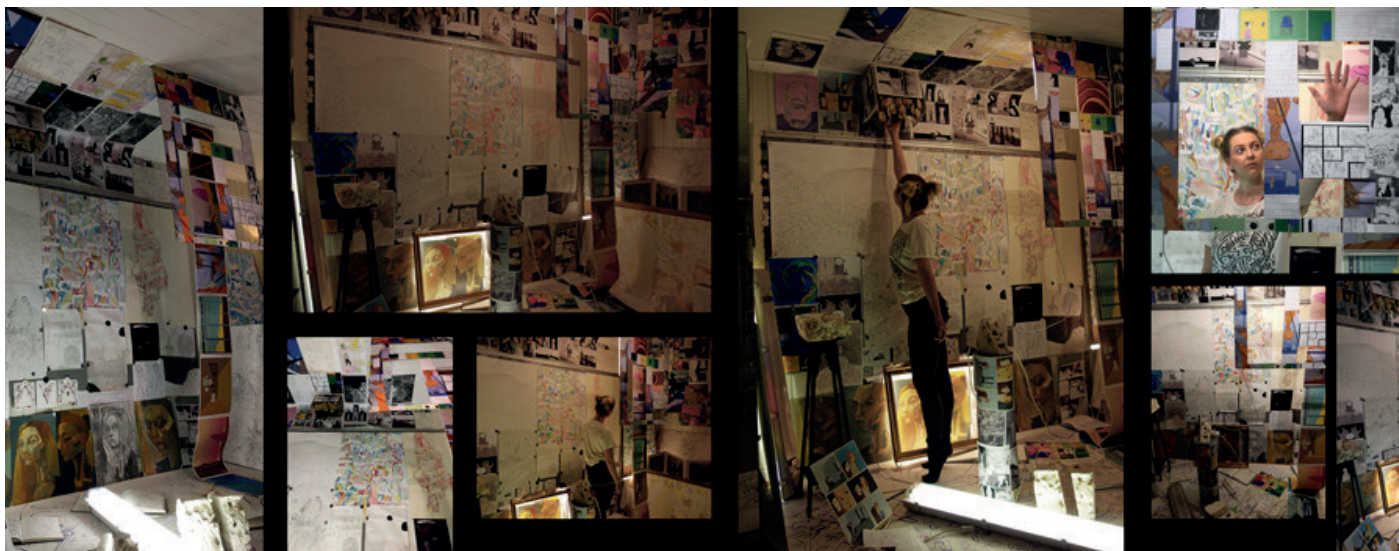


Wax model



wt: Flower painting





Old sketch for graphic novel installation

I had already made the painting "Nautfallets hage" before I had thought of my project. In a way, having it was a deciding factor. I made it right before summer holidays last year. I didn't think it was done, but Polina Chernitskaya my fellow student and friend suggested it was. I let it rest and after some months I realized she was right.



Nautfallets hage

The painting with the working title "Under the pink Sun" was the type of image that I really wanted to make and knew I shouldn't. I made the sketch quite early this school year, it was way too much into the fantasy genre. Still - the idea of a big burning pink sun over the postapocalypse-world made me so uneasy and happy at the same time. Here I started playing conscious with the different stages of detail, from rough and fast drawing showing the grass and plants, to the more articulated rendering of the woman's face.



wt: Under the pink Sun





Fourth painting

I had multiple possible motifs for the last painting in this quartet, two in particular. However, I was a bit hesitant to how many allusions and explicit bestiality I would include in my imagery, therefore I decided to go with one that felt like a trip further into the garden.



Sketches for fourth motif

The 5th painting, to be shown at NAAK, I went with the same mindset. In this painting I tried to experiment more with layering. I had experimented with this on a residency this september, there I made the painting "Jeremy the snail". There I painted with acrylic, with thin layers and a lot of pouring. It created pale atmosphere I appreciate. In this forest painting I'm testing if it's possible to combine that working method with my more controlled way of painting. The result don't resemble "Jeremy..." that much, but I do find the light to be intriguing. Even though the overall image also is quite chaotic.



Jeremy the snail

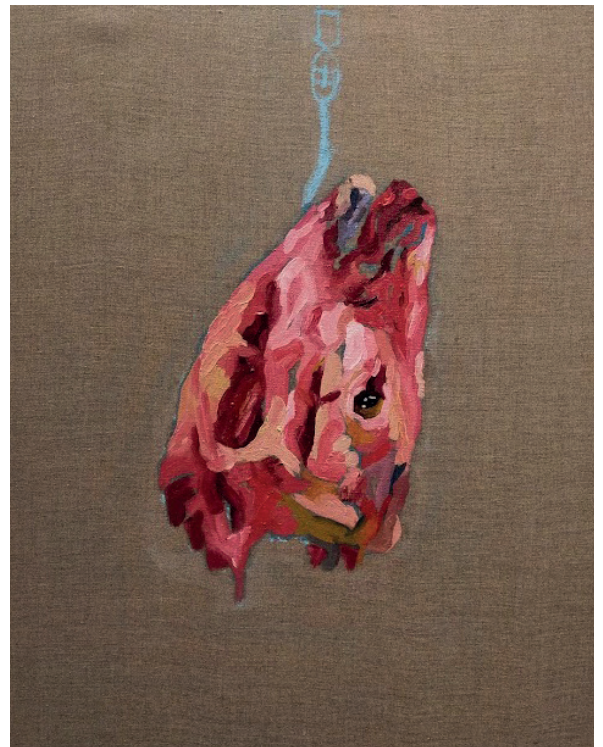


Still untitled, painting going to NAAK



In the very last painting, which will be shown at K.U.K, I decided to take a better look at the meat head in on of the photos from my brother. I also wanted to show off the beautiful linen canvas. I often let the materiality of the painting show. I let the hook be left as a pastel drawing, in the same vein of thinking. Showing the different stages of completion

I had never made a "still life" from photo before. Painting and drawing from photo is a practice I have been very sceptical towards, but in the end, reference is important. Stylistically, it's different from the others. It breaks away from the simplifications in that world. While the other images are living in an abstract realm, this relates more to the physical death. Which I find important, we are all bound to our flesh.



Meat Head

## READING LIST

### DIRECT RESEARCH

Meat Culture edited by Annie Pots

Litt som oss by Kristoffer Hatteland Endresen

Om hekser og heksebrenning by Hugh Trevor Roper

An artist's text book by Jan Svenungsson

the defamation of witches by Kristen Leo (video essay)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5YmzEdya9WM>

Witchcraft, Gender, & Marxism by Philosophy Tube/Oliver Thorn (video essay)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tmk47kh7fiE> <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/323819695> Linked oppression Connecting animal and gender attitudes

Feminism and Animals Rights

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lvDBh0vLl0A>

Just A Friendly Reminder That A Pig's Orgasm Supposedly Lasts For 30 Minutes by Louis Hanson (article)

<https://www.pedestrian.tv/pets/pig-orgasm/>

Pig faced women

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pig-faced\\_women](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pig-faced_women)

### LUST READING THROUGH THE MFA

Brødrene Karamasov / The Karamasov brothers by Fjodor Dostojevskij

Zalt by Jon Bing

Phenomena book series 1-7 by Ruben Eliassen

Er mor død by Vigdis Hjorth

Drømmefakultetet by Sara Stridsberg

Morgenstjernen by Karl Ove Knausgård

Årstid encyklopedien: Om høsten, vinteren, våren og sommeren by Karl Ove Knausgård

Ulvne fra evighets skog by Karl Ove Knausgård

### PODCASTS, HELPING THE PAINTING PROCESS

Podcast: Familien Karamasov

Podcast: Einar og Kristoffer leser Nietzsche

Podcast: Einar Duenger Bøhns filisofipod