

The Historian

Anna Munk, Bertil Osorio Heltoft, Christian John Munks

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Focusing on narrative in painting, *The Historian* presents new works by three Copenhagen-based artists whose practices are informed by specific types of history— whether that be 18th century still-life painting, Swedish coming-of-age documentaries or local myths passed on by word-of-mouth. Bad historians lie about what happened. This exhibition explores how painters negotiate between truthful record and interpretation, cherry-picking references and rearranging material to offer accounts of the world that are both insightful and deliberately open-ended.

Anna Munk's (b. 1994, Aarhus; DK) latest works identify consumerist undertones in traditional still-life painting and bring the genre into a contemporary context. Copying the approximate dimensions of digital advertisements found around Copenhagen, Munk's canvasses depict fruit and interior decor at a larger-than-life commercial scale. The artist appropriates elements from historical paintings by Chardin and Courbet, and creates mirror images of their compositions, slowing the easy movement of the eye across the image in the process. In *Cosmetic Corpse* (2024), Munk uses rouge and eye shadow alongside oil paint to draw out the lustrous fleshy appearance of the fruit. Somewhat sketchy in their appearance, the paintings channel a stripped down aesthetic that emphasises the idea of absence and decontextualises the objects from their periodised setting. Munk explores how attitudes towards beauty, aging, status, spending and desire have shifted as well as those impulses that remain consistent throughout history, despite technological and cultural changes.

Two paintings by **Christian John Munks** (b. 1985, Copenhagen; DK) present psychologically-charged explorations of masculinity, vulnerability and personal development. *Untitled (Händerna i munnen)* (2025) gives a claustrophobic view of a young man surrounded by an abstract backdrop that could be an outdoor environment or a patterned quilt. His severe haircut would not appear out of place either at a medieval monastery or a techno party. Broadly referring to an analogue past in his work, but resisting attempts to locate his imagery in a specific period, Munks favours a blended approach to composition. This painting combines a film still from a documentary about troubled teenage boys with references to garments worn by close friends, and details from live models: specifically the artist's own appearance as studied in a studio mirror. The effect is voyeuristic as Munks provides insight into a psychic space that feels fictitious and true-to-life. Here Munks explore the make-up of a certain kind of masculine psychology and form of isolation, without falling into the trap of offering prescriptive explanation.

Bertil Osorio's Heltoft's (b. 1990, Fynshoved; DK) small paintings are partly inspired by local myths from towns in the Danish countryside. Fashioned from a tin can, laid-in with canvas, *Fynshovedmanden* (2025) shows a folkloric creature with an elephantine nose and a nude male lower torso. The figure spreads his arms to reveal butterfly-like wings emblazoned with hands, or the inside of a trench coat where mysterious goods are offered for sale. Symbolic in the way of a hieroglyph or a pre-historic drawing, the painting seems to embody certain cultural attitudes towards fear and desire. Another painting shows the murky outline of an American stranger who once arrived via boat in the coastal town where the artist grew up, threatening residents with violence before disappearing. This work references the logic of archetypes or fables, as well as the medieval Italian tradition of 'deschi da parto' whereby gifts of small paintings would be given to mark the birth of a child— a practice that occurred across social classes. The artist's interest in folk culture or popular tradition extends to the wall-hanging sculpture 'Talk of the Town'— a minimalist expression that doubles as an architectural model, commemorating the porch as an important social site of storytelling and communal bonding.