

Flowers in Art

This autumn's major exhibition at ARKEN tells the story of humankind's fascination with the world of flowers. It examines how flowers in art reflect changing worldviews, outlooks on nature and social conditions – from the sensuous flower paintings of the nineteenth century to the eco-critical currents of contemporary art.

Flowers: we decorate our homes with them, use them as messengers to convey our innermost feelings and find healing in their scents and vitality. Flowers have always fascinated us and found their way into art. This autumn, flowers take over ARKEN with the exhibition *Flowers in Art*, which examines the many and varied relationships between flower and humankind expressed in art, as represented here by works by fifty-two international and Danish artists.

Says curator Dea Antonsen: *'Flowers have been a central motif throughout art history, but in these climate-critical times the flower motif takes on new and poignant relevance as we have to rethink our relationship with nature. The exhibition brings together iconic, historical works and cutting-edge contemporary art, prompting new perspectives to emerge on how we humans "consume" flowers, stage ourselves by means of flowers and shape the world through our relationships with flowers'.*

Historical roots and seeds of the future

As a motif in art, the flower has had several heydays. One of these was the nineteenth century's soulful depictions of the beauty and vitality of flowers, which were part of an overall quest to understand the essence of nature and how the world worked. Flower motifs appear in new ways in art today, a time when scientists issue dire warnings about biodiversity crises and young people take to the streets for the sake of the climate. The romantic notion of unspoiled nature has been lost, and contemporary artists rethink the relationship between flower and humankind in works full of finely attuned sensibilities, humour and critique.

From Claude Monet to Melanie Bonajo

The exhibition is in itself a diverse bouquet of sensory experiences, presenting many and varied works that depict flowers in such diverse media as painting, sculpture, photography, film and installation art. Bringing together illustrious artists of the past such as Odilon Redon, Claude Monet and Hilma af Klint with contemporary artists that include Melanie Bonajo, Tony Matelli and Petrit Halilaj & Alvaro Urbano, the exhibition forges new connections between the historical roots of the flower motif and the critical agendas of contemporary art. *Flowers in Art* is on show at ARKEN from 4 September 2021 to 9 January 2022.

The exhibition is accompanied by a lavishly illustrated catalogue in Danish and English with contributions from, among others, Danish curator Dea Antonsen, American historian of science Lorraine Daston, Polish philosopher Monika Bakke, Danish art historian Rasmus Kjørboe and Austrian literary scholar Isabel Kranz.

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