

Henrik Olesen

Digestion

24 June
- 20 August 2022

Does the same body cohere across different times or is it different bodies every time? Let's imagine body building as a constructivist or poetic calling – ongoing, hysterical. Digestion requires special organs in order to absorb and break down the various things and experiences that life brings our way. Mentally and materially, every time. Somewhere between the heart and the genitals, a stomach is summoned, and connected to this a mental intestine. And a smiley face. Henrik Olesen seems to call forth a fresh body right here in the dead-end of a certain masculine modernity we may never be fully done with. Sculpture and painting are reactivated for diagrammatic purposes, meaning they don't show bodies so much as elaborate the means of plugging in and connecting the desired parts in a given space and time. No figures here, only the opening of a sort of virtual construction site where another, actual body might already be forming: "my organs" for whomever.

Lack of information, 2001, gathers data on the legal status of the homosexual body in different places on earth in the year of the work's making. Olesen aggregated a global info-image that still more or less coheres between the Kunstverein Braunschweig in 2001, where this work was first presented, and here on Fasanenstraße in 2022. Not much has changed in the meantime: the internet is faster but sodomy is still punishable in most countries.

Monument after Anthony Caro, 2022, is a painted steel replica of the British sculptor's iconic *Early One Morning*, 1962. The first time Olesen copied this work was in 2016, for an exhibition at Reena Spaulings Fine Art, New York. Here in the Berliner Zimmer at Galerie Buchholz, employing metal now, a second copy that is truer to its Tate Modern model, and somehow even queerer. Olesen's replica becomes a sort of spine supporting a proliferation of organs (stomach, intestines, kidney, liver) in the room. Surrounding the sculpture's lobster-like form, a new series of oil paintings brings the body's insides out to the surface, where references to Brutalist painting (Fautrier) combine with poor materials such as inkjet print-outs on clear plastic, metal staples, and hand-written texts on bits of masking tape. The feeling is brightly provisional.

The stomach is a restless box working on formlessness. Plasticity is a way of understanding the brain's body in its most bendable, explosive states... the ongoing, immediate fleshiness of thought. Certain ends of Modernism now become sites of perverse and eager elaboration, places to build a body for now. Olesen names and multiplies the organs, installing his layered panels and colorfully encrusted canvases like a horizon seen from a ship, all-encompassing as a stomach.

John Kelsey