

Anton Munar
The Garden Dies with the Gardener
June 23 – September 2, 2023
Opening Friday, June 23, 6–9PM

Peres Projects is pleased to present *The Garden Dies with the Gardener*, Anton Munar's (b. 1997 in Copenhagen, DK) debut solo exhibition with Peres Projects and his first in Berlin.

"As we know, love needs re-inventing"
Arthur Rimbaud, *A Season in Hell, Delirium I*

Every spring I wait impatiently for the light pink, whipped-cream-colored magnolia leaves to blossom from the trees planted so generously around the city of Copenhagen, where we live. The lifetime of a magnolia flower is three weeks, so in those blossoming weeks I intentionally pass a particular magnolia tree on my walks through the garden of the Assistens Cemetery. On one of those days, their closed buds had finally sprung, and the flowers stretched towards the sun like ballet dancers in colorful skirts, ready to enter the stage. While standing in front of this magnificent performance, applauding the wondrous movements of the leaves, I was reminded of their soon-to-come withering. In this cyclical re-invention, the flowers are born; leaving us with the mystery of a leaf's lifecycle.

It is this mystery I am often left with, when exploring the works of Anton Munar, exhibited in *The Garden Dies with the Gardener*. In an attempt to write something coherent about my dear Anton's practice, I am repeatedly met by my own proximity. Nonetheless, here it goes:

In Anton's studio, where little space is left untouched, paints, brushes, palettes, papers, canvases, and printed pictures of friends, family, cathedrals, and landscapes lie in piles. It reminds me of an untouched garden, an untrodden land of narratives waiting to be heard. In there, he treads through the canvas with utmost curiosity, devoting himself to the process of getting to know a painting in its own time. Like the attentive gardener, he tends to it, waters it, nurtures it and is, consequently, surprised by it.

Anton approaches the landscapes in his paintings as friendships that change, evolve and expand over time. The landscapes are led by imaginative interpretations of his own childhood garden in Mallorca, an island rich with pine trees that so often appear in his paintings. As entries into Anton's conversations with nature, the evergreen pine trees frequently stand in the center of his paintings. Anton's relationship to the Mallorcan pine tree reminds me of something Lebanese-American painter and writer Etel Adnan once said. When asked in an interview who the most important person she had ever met was, she answered, "*a mountain*"; thus revealing that Mount Tamalpais had always been at the center of her being. I dare say that the Mallorcan pine tree is at the center of Anton's being.

Painting in the garden in Mallorca enables Anton to follow the temporality of nature directly onto the canvas. Within each work, the various shapes seem to take new forms, as when the contours of a shadow resemble that of a pine tree, or when a pine tree comes to look like the silhouette of a person. Outside, in an effort to catch the contours of shadows falling onto a blank canvas, he is met with his own belonging to the nature he is trying to grasp as the shadows slowly move behind him, making his own a part of the painting. This is what is grasped so vigorously by Anton's paintings – the temporality of nature, where the mysteries of a tree come to create as many dimensions as there are in life itself.

Anton's elongated canvases are almost the size of a human being, and demand a reverberating presence as they stand in front of their viewer. In his paintings, layers of paint vibrate underneath the surface, the colors growing freely into each other, scratched, sometimes aggressively, forward. Standing in front of Anton's paintings, I find myself in the rhythms of the world, in harmony with life, for better or worse. In his paintings, as

well as in his practice, human existence is held and celebrated, knowing that death always lies as its underlying current. I am reminded of this companionship and am suddenly no longer afraid, as I know he is not either, understanding that it is in there that the mystery of life exists.

"For years I am going, coming back, turning around the mountain, getting up in the middle of the night to make sure it is still there, staring at it, walking all over it, and dreaming, dreaming..."
Etel Adnan, *Journey to Mount Tamalpais*

Written by Maya Zoe Saadon

This is Anton Munar's first solo exhibition with Peres Projects. Thoughtful about the physicality of his works, Munar plays with a wide range of materials encompassing oil, distemper, gouache, ink, charcoal, chalk, pastel, and pigments, that he combines in varied mixtures to be applied either to canvas, linen, or wood, often borrowed from pieces of furniture such as found drawers. Through these rich layers of paint, he builds up evocative compositions at the confluence of fragmented narratives drawn from the driving force of love, where interior and exterior spaces intertwine and where phantasmagoric visions infiltrate the physical world. Munar, who received his MFA in Fine Arts from the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in 2023, has had solo exhibitions at Painters Painting Paintings, St. Albans (2023), diez, Amsterdam (2022), and Galleri Q, Copenhagen (2020). His work has been presented in group exhibitions at Kunsthall Charlottenborg, Copenhagen (2023), CASTLE, Los Angeles (2023), Peres Projects, Seoul (2023), Marie Kirkegaard Gallery, Copenhagen (2022), Claas Reiss, London (2021), Alice Folker, Copenhagen (2021), Indebt Studios, Amsterdam (2021), and The Danish Royal Academy of Fine Arts, Copenhagen (2019), among others.

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