

GALLERI NICOLAI WALLNER

Post Human

Eva Helene Pade, Hannah Levy, Julie Falk, Kinga Bartis & Rasmus Myrup

August 23 - October 12 | 2024

Post Human 2024

In 1993, just six months before opening my gallery, I took a train journey from Copenhagen to Hamburg with my mother. Our destination was the Deichtorhallen, where the legendary art dealer Jeffrey Deitch curated the groundbreaking exhibition Post Human. Back then, long before the internet and a decade before social media became popular, the only way to get information about art was through print or by visiting exhibitions. My mother, though not particularly interested in art, joined me, and with her as my witness I started my pilgrimage of the 90's.

I had heard about Post Human from artists who had already visited and I was eager to see it for myself. Entering the giant halls of Deichtorhallen, I encountered works by international artists who would soon become central to my interest in art. It's fair to say, I was mesmerized from the very moment of entering. Everywhere you looked were works by artists exploring a new aesthetic pluralism, pushing the known boundaries of visual art. The lineup was breathtaking: Janine Antoni, Paul McCarthy, Mike Kelley, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Robert Gober, Cady Noland, Charles Ray, Cindy Sherman, Matthew Barney, Karen Kilimnik, Martin Kippenberger, Jeff Koons, Jeff Wall, Kiki Smith, and many more whose influence persists in contemporary art.

The 1990s was a period of reintroducing new figurative art, rooted more in the performance art of the 1970s than in traditional figurative painting. Curator Jeffrey Deitch wrote: "They are exploring through their art the same questioning of traditional notions of gender, sexuality, and self-identity that is taking place in the world at large." He continued, writing about the artists' "...embrace of artificiality. Realism as we used to know it may no longer be possible."

The original catalogue was a collage of images blending art and reality. It featured glossy magazine images of people undergoing plastic surgery, politicians, movie stars, pop icons like Michael Jackson, androids from pop culture, big pharma pills, and early VR technology—all elements representing the post-human condition. Initially, the works seemed centered on the physical body, but upon closer examination they revealed deeper interpretations of the human condition, both physical and psychological. The exhibition posited that humanity had transcended the natural, with the body no longer serving as a collective organic reference point but as something that could be manipulated.

Today, the 1993 exhibition seems very expressive, intense and explicit, reflecting that changes in the human condition are physical rather than spiritual. I would like to use the 30th anniversary of the gallery to pay homage to the original Post Human exhibition. It significantly influenced my passion for art and stands out as one of the most important exhibitions I have experienced, one that set me on the long and exciting journey I continue today. I asked myself how would that show look in 2024, how could artists today interpret the human experience? My wish is to create an exhibition bearing the same title with art that also explores figuration, but now on a more emotive level, exposing the spirituality behind the physicality.

This exhibition will feature artworks by artists who engage with the human experience in multifaceted ways. They examine not only the physical form of the human body but also delve into the realms of consciousness, interpretation and the transcendence of humanity into alternative forms, whether through spirituality, psychology, ethics, technology or other means.

I understand the boldness of revisiting such a profound subject within the limitations of a gallery space. However, I believe it is a challenge worth undertaking, even if our exhibition can only capture a fraction of the richness and relevance inherent in this theme. My hope is that this exhibition may inspire larger institutions to take on the challenge of creating a more expansive exploration of this subject.

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Eva Helene Pade's work explores the emotions and intensity of human relationships. Working primarily within the medium of painting, people mingle from canvas to canvas. Absorbed in conversation, dancing, exchanging, being intimate—relationships unfold and deepen in timeless environments that could equally be nightclubs, bedrooms, romantic gardens or bustling crowds whose intentions remain ambiguous.

Hannah Levy's sculptures both incite and repel touch. By manipulating texturally incongruous materials such as silicone, glass and steel, Levy produces tactile structures that arouse an acute bodily awareness. Her references are broad: medical equipment, hardware, prosthetics, vegetables, and furniture are anthropomorphized through welded curves and cast appendages that relate to the human form.

Julie Falk takes discarded bodies as a point of departure in her recent work, using bronze cast hair cut from hospital-prescribed wigs. Falk points to the bodily displacement of the artist herself, working away from the studio, as an inverse or anti-position, operating at odds, and meanwhile collecting scrap materials – forms that are discarded, abject, or thrown from use.

Kinga Bartis' approach to painting lies outside the boundaries of the classic school of the medium. Eschewing labels, Bartis envisions painting as a means of breaking free from the habitual relationship of defining and redefining of our existence—Bartis chooses to instead look towards a more multidisciplinary and open approach.

Rasmus Myrup's installations, sculptures and works on paper reintroduce us to a world which is subversively ours but can be overtly ours if we so choose. This drive to bring other narratives to the forefront is echoed in Myrup's technical prowess, which utilises both traditional practices and modern techniques to create something which feels uniquely in the here and now.