

Memory is a mode of production; it is a form of authorship in the same way that repetition is a form of interpretation. Translation is the same: whether between languages or media, some meaning erodes, like mud from the side of a hill, exposing new surface, creating new ground. Magnus Frederik Clausen uses this slippage as his subject and material; this space of estrangement is where he plays. Kaare Ruud's sculptures, on the other hand, move towards compensating it, manifesting what was lost – what possibly never really was.

Ruud creates his pencil houses from memory. Each represents a specific building that he's visited in the past, and which has acquired some kind of meaning, however fleeting and vague, by virtue of its distance from the present. A building for pigs, one for prayer, one for gathering. Sites full of the mysteriousness and mundanity of childhood, the collectivity we trap children in. What triggers his desire to manifest them materially? What memories are produced here, what forgetting bridged? He assembles them intuitively, that is to say, fancifully, unfaithfully. The pencil houses that hover detached in space evidence the ruins of remembering. In essence, Ruud's is a romantic project about longing, interiority and emotion. His art provides a structure on which to hang these, what—projections, remainders?—of the past.

Clausen begins with Benny's drawing of a yellow boy who wears a cap and eats a meatball. He inverts the colours leaving most of the composition black, its protagonist a glaring white stain. The drawing is then replicated on canvas by one of two assistants, then the other. The next day, on Clausen's instructions, they might try again. Or paint, not from the drawing, but yesterday's painting. They are dense and gestural, Clausen watches them recede into the distance as if watching, too, was a type of production. In another drawing, the head of the boy peeks out over a line. Beneath is the outsized signature of the original artist: Benny 2022. 'Move the figure', Clausen instructs, and watches as assistant 1 or 2 does so. As agency and authorship are obscured, the work becomes about its own constitution. It is a formal exercise seem to sprung from a strong sense that the original – the drawing, the boy, what he felt while drawing, a feeling of being overwhelmed while living – is already *too full* and that this series of interpretations and translations, this mudslide, might serve as a solution.

There is a fine line between erosion and decay. When does an entity (a drawing, a piece of furniture, a memory, a being) deteriorate at the hands of time and when does it simply alter? This is a great question for almost all things, except, unfortunately, humans. Trees, for instance, become more beautiful, more impressive with age. Branches die off and turn into ornaments, while others live on. But humans, we seem to have collectively decided, only decay. That they wither rather than transform, that they die suddenly and irrevocably from one moment to the next, could be because life, for them, is defined so narrowly along the lines of individual consciousness and agency. It

could be that humans – at least today, in the culture we live in – create art because of this unfortunate circumstance. Art is our dead branch, the majesty of time.

Seating is how subjectivity is recognised in furniture. There are as many seats as there are recognised subjects, and, as we know, not everyone gets a seat. In some languages, such as German and Danish, to be *seatly* means to be decent. When seats break, as in Ruud's collapsed Havana chair, subjectivity seeps out of it, like puss from a wound, and it becomes a sculpture. The tenderness we find in his work stems from an almost paradoxical resistance to this process. He writes:

hull i hodet  
og hjertet,  
legger press  
...  
Passer på  
at kjærligheten ikke.  
Renner  
ut.<sup>1</sup>

Conversely – and yet, in a way, obliquely adjacent – Clausen's whole point is to drain Benny's drawings of subjectivity, that is, of the unfortunate human proclivity to decay. They become form away from emotion, achieve a kind of diplomatic immunity, if you will, an impersonal coolness, which allows them to travel and live on.

Meaning must be legible to matter, and in order to read we must be able to see a thing in its entirety – we usually need some distance. Here is a kind of contradiction in Ruud's practice: his efforts at approximation rely on a priori distance, which must, to some extent, be maintained, in order for the meaning that is produced by this inching closer and closer, this conjuring act, to stay legible. The decay that we witness in his pencil houses and errant furniture – their frayed edges, their sunkennes – is as carefully managed as the erosion of subjectivity that takes place as Clausen's assistants set out to paint Benny's drawings again and again while the artist watches from afar.

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<sup>1</sup> hole in the head  
and the heart,  
applying  
pressure  
....  
taking care  
that love doesn't.  
Seep  
out

Ruud – as we know, a poet – will often use fragments of his own writing as titles for his works. Poetry is where language comes apart as a system and reveals itself as human, that is to say, fallible, idiosyncratic and liable to decay. Titles and names are the seats of language; how one subject is distinguished from the next, whether artwork or artist or human. A child's signature on their drawing grows with their sense of self. What is also at stake in the oversized signature, perhaps, is the conflation between sign and image, two things we cannot blame children for mixing up. To draw a round face with eyes and a hat is a sign that says: *me*. A hieroglyph. To write one's name is the same. Children will often add their age. 6 years old, 10 years old. Or the date (as on Fedtedeller): 2023. This timestamp reveals a sophisticated understanding of how subjectivity shifts and alters (how under certain circumstances it might leak, drain, decay). Benny in 2023 is not the same as in 2022; the child knows that very well.

In Clausen's paintings (for it is he, after all, who signs them), Benny's signature moves further into the realm of images. Benny's authorship becomes a prompt, both material and conceptual, which sets Clausen's process into motion. We achieve distance through mediation – the materials *lost* in translation between one iteration and the next is what allows the subject of Clausen's art to emerge. The difference between the art of Ruud and Clausen is the difference between the poem and the prompt. Where the two nevertheless meet is in their respective efforts to make objects that act as containers for what cannot ordinarily be contained (relations, between forms and people, memories). The prompt – how it detaches from its source, becomes blunt and absurd – comes close to the poem. *Funding Emotions* is an exhibition about this apparent contradiction, this meeting of ends. To invest in something, and to be invested; value as metaphor for emotion, affect as a form of labour. Then there is the question of currency and exchange rates, the tax added on translation, the possible liquidity of an asset. These are artists who circle around what matters, protect and disguise it, hang it on the wall and from the ceiling.

– *Kristian Vistrup Madsen, 2023*