

Nervetråde

Opening: 12.09.2026, 17 – 21.00



Nervetråde (Nerve Fibers) revolves around the grotesque, tracing threads from the nervous sensibility of literature around 1900, when Den Frie was founded, to the frayed nerves of contemporary art. The exhibition brings together works by Danish and international artists whose works pulse with the unease and strangeness running through our time. Nervetråde also branches out into an eccentric and off-kilter performance programme, presented as part of the performance platform Toaster over the course of the exhibition.

In *Nervetråde*, the grotesque emerges as a distinct way of engaging with the world, making the familiar strange through distortion, displacement and contrast. The exhibition draws inspiration from a number of Danish writers who, at the turn of the twentieth century, broke with realist modes of writing through narratives that embraced the peculiar, the morbid, the nervous and the bizarre. Their writing suggested that behind the familiar world of everyday life lay another, more unstable one; the works in the exhibition do the same.

Drawing on this strain in Danish literature, which has received renewed attention in recent years, the exhibition presents contemporary artists who, each in their own way, reshape reality through grotesque impulses and ambivalent effects. Their works bring incompatible things—the comic and the frightening, the rational and the absurd—into proximity, creating a distorted image of the paradoxical world in which we live.

The works reveal a deformed world, stranger and more contradictory than the one we normally perceive. The grotesque and uncanny qualities of the works on display—from painting and sculpture to video, installation, performance, text and drawing—are variously linked to feelings of anxiety and uncertainty, echoes of our nervous age.

In Martine Syms's video work *DED*, a digital avatar of the artist repeatedly stumbles and dies in an indeterminate virtual space, while, in Roland Topor's images, soft colours envelop bodies contorted into improbable forms. In Hanne Darboven's *Kalenderbuch 92*, time is subjected to an enigmatic mathematical system, while Senga Nengudi's *Untitled* evokes a newly assembled body made from nylon stockings stretched to breaking point. Across three evenings during the exhibition period, we present an international performance programme of dance, music, language and more to explore the undersides of the categories and conventions that structure the familiar world.

Nervetråde does not seek to soothe our nerves, but rather to set them on edge, stimulating them to unpredictable ends.

Participating artists

Kai Althoff, Lutz Bacher, Meriem Bennani & Orian Barki, Adam Christensen, Hanne Darboven, Julie Falk, Karen Kilimnik, Ville Laurinkoski, Adam Linder, Senga Nengudi, Rolf Nowotny, Samara Sallam, Agnes Scherer, Sara Sjölin, spellchestra, Martine Syms, Alma Toasperm, Roland Topor, Peter Wächtler og Sofie Winther

Curated by

Magnus Thorø Clausen and Sif Lindblad

With the support from

Det Obelske Familiefond, Augustinus Fonden, Statens Kunstfond, Aage og Johanne Louis-Hansens Fond, Dansk Tennis Fond og Ny Carlsbergfondet

Performance programme

24.09. 17-21.00

Adam Linder, *Mothering The Tongue*
Adam Christensen, *A Vampire Kiss*

01.10. 18-21.00

Sara Sjölin, *new work*
spellchestra, *Marketplace*

22.10. 18-21.00

Sofie Winther, *Outlet*
Alma Toasperm, *-plex*

Presented by Den Frie as part of the performance platform Toaster

Practical info

Den Frie Udstillingsbygning
Oslo Plads 1, 2100 Copenhagen Ø.
Opening: 12.09.2026, 17 – 21.00, Free entrance.
Café Pegasus will serve food and drinks at happy hour prices.

Exhibition period: 12.09. – 01.11.2026

Press contact

Martin Wendelbo
mw@denfrie.dk
+45 42 63 53 27

Press kit can be downloaded [here](#).
Installation views will be added on Friday, 18 April.
Please contact us if you need any additional material.

Man–Tir: Lukket

Ons-Fre: 12–18.00

Tors: 12–20.00

Lør–Søn: 10–18.00

www.denfrie.dk

www.toastercph.dk