

PRESS RELEASE

John Kørner Fallen Fruit from Frisland

Private View 6 – 8pm Saturday 19 January

Exhibition continues until 2 March 2013



Victoria Miro is pleased to announce the gallery's third exhibition by the Danish artist John Kørner.

Fallen Fruit from Frisland comprises a series of new paintings presented as part of an installation that features a carpeted floor, rising wave-like against one wall, and a simple wooden boat made by the artist's great-grandfather

The exhibition title refers to Frisia, a coastal area that extends across the Netherlands and Germany to the Danish border. Until the construction of canals during the 1920s and 1930s, this low-lying district, also known as Friesland, Fryslân and Frisland,

was flooded for much of the year. In this mutable landscape locals made their farms on top of artificial hills, using boats to travel from field to field. It was here that Kørner's great-grandfather plied his trade as a boat builder. Many decades later the artist discovered that a small wooden rowing boat made by his ancestor had been preserved in a museum.

Transported to London, the ancestral vessel functions as a poetic anchor point for paintings that ask us to consider our relationship to the ever-shifting rhythms, flows and tides of the natural world. On an initial viewing, Kørner's new paintings appear to mark a departure from previous works, such as the fields of hazard yellow populated by abstract and figurative forms in 2006 *Problems*, or *War Problems*, the 2008 series in which Kørner addressed head-on the human cost of Denmark's involvement in the 'War on Terror' in Afghanistan.

Smaller in scale, and often deceptively simple in composition, these works seem to spring from a quieter tradition of landscape painting. Canals, trees, houses... it may seem as if these scenes were born in the sleepy ateliers of Northern Europe in the seventeenth century. Yet, in Kørner's hands, landscape becomes an arena rich with transhistorical currents, almost hallucinatory with interminglings of the personal and philosophical.

Kørner's work always encourages musings that can seem contradictory: on the one hand it is apparently open and easy-going, on the other it seems freighted with awkward questions about representation, knowledge, faith. The work speaks unquestionably to our own moment.

Here, the artist's signature use of watered-down acrylics chimes with the work's elemental subject matter. In several images rural idylls appear vulnerable against washes of paint that, like the seas surrounding Frisland, threaten to overwhelm them. In other paintings figurative elements seem about to dissolve or bleed into one another, like spectres or memories, or else they co-exist with forms that, functioning along the lines of the ovals and curlicues in earlier *Problem* paintings, appear as a kind of pre-thought.

In two canal paintings, these nascent forms proliferate, agitating the sky. We might think of them as viral, perhaps even architectural, their cell-like shape seeming to denote both a natural code and, en masse, a structure that brings to mind a kind of floating sci-fi city, recalling sources as varied as Jonathan Swift and Buckminster Fuller.

In another painting we see figures walking through an orchard while apples drop from the trees. These are the fruits referred to in the exhibition title, an allusion to the beliefs of hard-line fruitarians who eat only that which has fallen to the ground (and also, we assume, a nod to Isaac Newton and Adam and Eve).

What to believe in, or not, is always at the forefront of any consideration of Kørner's art. In *Fallen Fruit from Frisland* a romantic idea of the sublime meets a contemporary form of painting that arrives with doubts about the medium built in. Acknowledging the power of landscape painting without ever appearing wistful for a time when it was predominant, unquestioned, Kørner delights in summoning the instantly nameable, even going so far as to flirt with cliché. But, crucially, he always leaves space for ambiguity, some extra work for eye and mind to do – it is surely no accident that those apples resemble thought bubbles.

It is no accident either that Kørner makes reference to a landscape that over the centuries has been under constant attack from the elements, endlessly renewed, one that is now as manmade as it can be said to be natural.

Covered in a geometrically patterned carpet, a manmade 'wave' greets viewers to this exhibition. This breaker, part Hokusai's *Great Wave*, part skateboard ramp, is a grandiose theatrical element designed to accentuate the drama of looking and thinking about the natural world as depicted in these paintings. Kørner's ancestral boat, by contrast, is utilitarian, humble, freighted with sweetly personal associations. Considering these elements in tandem we come up against some of the problems of representation that have preoccupied Kørner throughout his career – chief among them being the problem of channelling personal experience into art and back out into the 'real' world, whatever we may take that to mean. Looking inside the boat we encounter a series of small ceramic forms that function like the repeated, cell-like shapes in the paintings. The artist also refers to these nubs of clay as *Problems*. Perhaps, though, like the apple that falls from the tree, they might be thought of as gifts. After all, one person's problem is another's possibility.

In the end, perhaps Kørner's art can itself be regarded as a kind of vessel, one that transports us across the bright, choppy waters of representation from the known world to a brackish place where the unexpected, inexplicable, even miraculous can occur.

Biography

Born in Århus, Denmark in 1967, John Kørner lives and works in Copenhagen. He studied at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts Copenhagen between 1992 and 1998. Kørner has had solo exhibitions at Herning Museum of Contemporary Art, Denmark (forthcoming in 2013), IMO projects, Copenhagen, Denmark (2012), Patricia Low Contemporary, Gstaad, Switzerland (2009) ARoS Århus Kunstmuseum, Denmark (2006), Politikens Galleri, Denmark (2006) Moderna Museet, Sweden (2005) and Herning Museum of Art, Denmark (2003). His work has been included in group exhibitions including shows at; Palais De Tokyo, Paris (2012), Herning Art Museum, Denmark (2009) U-Turn Copenhagen Quadriennial (2008); Kunsthall Charlottenburg, Copenhagen (2008); Arken Museum of Modern Art, Denmark (2007).

Victoria Miro Gallery, 16 Wharf Road, London N1 7RW

Opening Times 10am – 6pm. Tuesday to Saturday. Admission Free

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Walking List

Victoria Miro No. 16

Downstairs gallery – clockwise from left



Morning in Frisland, 2012
Acrylic on canvas
81 x 100 cm, 31 7/8 x 39 3/8 in



14 Blue Moons, 2012
Acrylic on canvas
81 x 100 cm, 31 7/8 x 39 3/8 in



Life in Front of Fiction, 2012
Acrylic on canvas
81 x 120 cm, 31 7/8 x 47 1/4 in



Frisland After Rain, 2012
Acrylic on canvas
180 x 240 cm, 70 7/8 x 94 1/2 in



The Sky is Falling Down, 2012
Acrylic on canvas
150 x 120 cm, 59 1/8 x 47 1/4 in



Apples and Boys, 2012
Acrylic on canvas
60 x 130 cm, 23 5/8 x 51 1/8 in



12 O'Clock at The Beach, 2012
Acrylic on canvas
180 x 240 cm, 70 7/8 x 94 1/2 in



Windy, 2012
Acrylic on canvas
81 x 120 cm, 31 7/8 x 47 1/4 in



Into Eternity, 2012
Mixed media installation: wooden boat, ceramic, fiberglass, wood, carpet
Dimensions variable

Reception



Blue Grass, 2012
Acrylic on canvas
100 x 81 cm, 39 3/8 x 31 7/8 in