

Pavilion of Denmark at the International Art Exhibition
23 April – 27 November 2022
Giardini, Venice
Curated by Jacob Lillemose
Commissioned by Danish Arts Foundation



Pavilion of Denmark unveils Uffe Isolotto's haunting transhuman world, *We Walked the Earth*, at La Biennale di Venezia 2022

The Pavilion of Denmark at the 59th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia is excited to present the installation *We Walked the Earth*, created by Uffe Isolotto and curated by Jacob Lillemose. Visitors step into a hyperrealistic world where elements from an idyllic Danish farm life of the past blend with strange sci-fi phenomena to create a haunting image of an uncertain present. Taking over the entire Pavilion, *We Walked the Earth* displays an unexpected drama of life and death that revolves around a family of three centaurs. Trying to cope with the challenges of a changing world, the family embodies an uneasy state of mind between despair and hope that speaks to the deep ambiguities of our current times.



Installation image of Uffe Isolotto, *We Walked the Earth*, 2022.
The Pavilion of Denmark, Biennale Arte 2022.

The Pavilion has been transformed into an uncanny farmhouse. Next to the entrance lies a heap of horse manure and a small area paved with field stones. Inside the pavilion, piles of eelgrass, once commonly used for farmhouse roofs on the island of Læsø in Denmark, fill one of the main spaces. These are all elements characteristic of country life. However, upon closer inspection, it becomes

apparent that everything seemingly familiar is altered. Curious tools reminiscent of those used in traditional Danish farming and fishing techniques lay around, yet they are remarkably different. In one of the rooms hangs a mutated ham, and unfamiliar species of farm crops are scattered around the Pavilion, some oozing a blue fluid.

The protagonists are two hyperrealistic sculptures of centaurs. Rather than mythical creatures, they are the physical result of a biotechnological and transhuman attempt to survive in a world where it is no longer enough to be human as we know it. Our descendants have adapted to the new conditions of a changed world through a demanding and dramatic process. Their faces, bodies and hands – a fifth larger than an average human and covered in markings – bear witness to their arduous labour. The same blue fluid oozing out of the crops appears to sustain them through tubes – be it a heating agent, a form of nutrition or a drug.

A drama of life and death plays out across the Pavilion's two main rooms. The male centaur has taken his own life and can be seen hanging from a piece of rope-like chain suspended from the ceiling, while the female centaur is lying on the floor in the adjacent room, giving birth to a baby centaur. It is an open question as to why the male centaur has decided to take his own life, but the act seems inextricably linked to the simultaneous birth of his offspring, almost as if he has realised that his time in this changing world is over and it is now up to the next, further evolved generation to take over. The baby centaur looks to be of a different hybrid than its parents. Its human hands are mutated towards something that both holds a promise for the future and suggests hard times ahead.

Uffe Isolotto says, "I have transformed the entire Pavilion. As visitors enter, they will encounter an apparently idyllic Danish farmhouse, where they will find a haunting drama of life and death. There is a deep uncertainty in understanding what has happened to the centaurs and the world they live in. Is it a tragic or hopeful situation, or perhaps both? Even though the centaurs may not be real, we feel their struggle. The present time we live in is becoming increasingly complex and unpredictable as we face a lot of challenging realities, whether ecological, political or existential. There's much hope and despair in the air, and I want to make that a physical reality with this installation. *We Walked the Earth* also draws on experiences from my personal life that in a metaphorical sense resonate with more universal feelings and thoughts about life and death that I sense exist in the world today."

Curator, Jacob Lillemose says, "More and more people in Denmark move to the countryside to live a more simple and self-sufficient life. At the same time, the news media, politicians and capitalistic enterprises daily celebrate the promises of new technologies. In this context, *We Walked the Earth* asks if we should look backward or forward for solutions to the problems of the world. Moreover, it addresses a world at a crossroads, where something familiar disappears and something unknown emerges. In that sense it's an image of the circle of life and death. How we navigate this intimate and complex entanglement of endings and beginnings is critical to the future we will create for ourselves here on Earth."

Like a complex film production, Isolotto and Lillemose have collaborated with a collective of specialists, including 10 Tons (model of centaurs), Fyns Naturværksted (taxidermy), Thomas Foldberg Studio (humanoid parts), Anne Sofie Madsen (clothing and accessories), Soft Baroque (aluminium structures), Maria Koshenkova (glass works), Ida Hy (resin and silicone works), Christine Bechameil and Marie Søegaard Tarpø (scenic painting) and Line-Gry Hørup (graphic design).

The installation is accompanied by a short story entitled *And Then We Became Water*, conceptualized by Isolotto and Lillemose, and written by Lillemose himself. Like a piece of fanfiction, it expands the narrative of the installation, imagining a future artificial being roaming the seabed of a flooded Venice where it encounters the body of a centaur and another liquid being.

The Danish Arts Foundation's Committee for Visual Arts Project Funding appointed Isolotto following a new open-call process where proposals were welcomed from all interested Danish visual artists. From a total of 190 submissions, the committee shortlisted three artists who were asked to elaborate on their project proposals.

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Enter the world of *We Walked the Earth* by following [@wewalkedtheearth](#) and the [@danishpavilion](#) and using the hashtags [#WeWalkedTheEarth](#), [#Uffelsolotto](#), [#DanishPavilion2022](#) and [#BiennaleArte2022](#)

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Notes to Editors

Uffe Isolotto (b.1976) works with physical and digital sculptures, as well as time-based media such as film and animation. He graduated from the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in 2007 and is currently based in Copenhagen. He has participated in exhibitions both at home and abroad, including Arken Museum of Modern Art, Overgaden Institute of Contemporary Art, Nikolaj Kunsthal, Malmö Konsthall and the 14th Media Arts Biennial in Santiago, Chile. He is represented with works at the National Gallery of Denmark and Holstebro Art Museum and has been commissioned to do several large-scale public art projects such as *Bodies on Balconies* for Vendsyssel Theatre in Hjørring, Denmark. Isolotto ran the exhibition and production platform *Age of Aquarius* together with Nanna Starck from 2016 to 2019. Through curation and work production, Isolotto cultivated different ecologies, both biological and synthetic, and over time, the two separate tracks have merged into a practice that encompasses body, technology, and ecologies in the broadest sense.

Jacob Lillemose is a curator and writer based in Copenhagen. He works at the Medical Museion

at the University of Copenhagen on a project about “the entangled body” called *The World is in You*. He co-curated *Momentum 9: Alienation* in Moss, Norway in 2017 and was head of exhibitions at the transmediale festival in Berlin 2012-2013. From 2015-2017 he ran the exhibition space X AND BEYOND dedicated to art and disasters. He has written extensively on art and movies in an international context, recently with a focus on horror and social mythologies. He holds a PhD in art history from the University of Copenhagen. He is the author of the novel *Architecture Zero* (A Mock Book, 2021) and the essay collection *Strange Planet. Perspectives on Human Life on Earth* (A Mock Book, 2022, in Danish).

Danish Arts Foundation

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