

Title: Employee of the Month  
Artist: Tanja Nis-Hansen  
Curators: Paola Paleari and Anne Zychalak Stolten  
Location: Vestjyllands Kunstpavillon, Videbæk (Denmark)  
Dates: July 23rd - August 21st, 2022  
Photographer: Jacob Friis-Holm Nielsen

For the exhibition *Employee of the Month*, Tanja Nis-Hansen has created a site-specific body of work consisting of six large painted wooden elements, each forming a letter in the word "crumbs".

The work takes inspiration from Julia Stephen's book *Notes from Sick Rooms* from 1885, which was subsequently published as an addition to her daughter Virginia Woolf's text *On Being Ill*. The book addresses illness with clarity and humour, offering caregivers helpful information on nursing. It provides instruction on attending to the tiny details that increase the patient's comfort, with sections on reducing noise, dimming light or minding crumbs in the bed. Julia Stephen writes: "Among the number of small evils which haunt illness, the greatest, in the misery which it can cause, though smallest in size, is crumbs."

Adopting a similar balance between lightness and seriousness, Nis-Hansen has created a catchphrase that, by virtue of its physical dimension, yells out the often unheard pain a sick body suffers from. The artist inverts the scale of things and turns an apparently insignificant and almost invisible inconvenience into an inevitable phenomenon of major importance, besides pointing metaphorically to the often unapplauded efforts linked to care and compassion.

At the same time, the word in itself enigmatically acts as a textual ornament in the room. The scenographical arrangement of the panels taking the floor instead of hanging on the walls is both a statement against the normatives of art display and an invitation to look at painting released from its settled form as a commodity. Each panel is treated differently in regards to techniques and imagery, and still relying on the classic understanding of how a "proper painting" should be executed. Yet, its very shape seems to mock the rigidity of the traditional canvas. Moreover, on their backside, the artist has pasted annotations, sketches and scrap of papers belonging to the preparatory work: something the viewer is usually not supposed to see and that drives the value of the artwork towards an integrated experience of all its phases.

By letting the painting enter into a negotiation of its singular and serial value, the artist intends to challenge the aura of uniqueness that still surrounds the painting surface, as well as to take a closer look at its possible function as a backdrop in an arranged setting. The panels are not simply installed but rather "set-up" - a shift that transforms them from self-concluded frontal screens to an open platform with a performative potential. For her solo show at Vestjyllands Kunstpavillon, Tanja Nis-Hansen provides room for an expanded encounter with painting, all the while sharpening the focus of our often blurred view on care work.

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