

ARKEN

PRESS RELEASE

BUTTERFLY! ARKEN's collection curated by Esben Weile Kjær

Esben Weile Kjær is a rising star on the international art scene, presenting performances at Art Basel in Miami and Centre Pompidou in Paris. This spring, he will be the first artist ever to curate an exhibition of works from ARKEN's collection of Danish and international contemporary art.

On 10 February, Esben Weile Kjær opens his personal staging of ARKEN's collection. Called *BUTTERFLY!*, the exhibition invites visitors to explore the museum's works within an immersive setting reminiscent of an abandoned skateboard park or a film set no longer in use. A two-metre-tall cartoon-like butterfly in death metal makeup welcomes all upon arrival.

The foundations for Weile Kjær's fascination with ARKEN's collection were laid when he was quite young: *'I clearly remember my first visit to ARKEN. I was 15 years old and saw my own life reflected in many of the works. They looked like the world I grew up in. Damien Hirst's butterfly paintings, Wolfgang Tillmans' photographs of vegetables and cigarette butts, Micha Klein's 'Crystal Powder from God'. This was a kind of art experience I'd never had before. Before this, there had always been some built-in distance. The works on the walls of ARKEN borrowed elements from the popular culture of the '90s and '00s: magazine covers, CD covers and music videos. They awakened a nostalgic feeling in me,'* says Esben Weile Kjær.

Ever since then, the artist has had a particular fondness for ARKEN's collection, and in this exhibition Esben Weile Kjær takes a nostalgic look back at especially the '90s artists who contributed to shaping his own generation. What became of the optimism, radicalism and notions of freedom that characterised art in the time after the fall of the Berlin wall? In what way is our present-day mediated everyday life a result of that era's faith in technological developments? These are some of the questions which Esben Weile Kjær invites us to reflect on in his personal orchestration of ARKEN's collection. As he says:

'I want to show ARKEN's pictures in a new way. I think we should look at them again and use them to try to understand ourselves. Not as we were when they were created, but as we are today.'

Taking his starting point in memories of his own childhood and youth, Esben Weile Kjær has created an environment where graffiti and discarded skateboard ramps form the backdrop for a selection of more than 50 works from ARKEN's collection as well as a brand-new work by Weile Kjær himself, created especially for the exhibition. Sexuality, coming of age and the individual's relationship with popular culture are some of the recurring themes of the exhibition, which has a soundtrack by Courtesy, composer and DJ at the legendary Berlin nightclub Berghain, and graffiti painted by Danish artist Mira Winding.

The exhibition shows works by artists such as Nancy Burson, Sophie Calle, Ruth Campau, Claus Carstensen, Damien Hirst, Henrik Plenge Jakobsen, Micha Klein, Jouko Lehtola, Sarah Lucas, Wolfgang Tillmans and many more.

About Esben Weile Kjær

Esben Weile Kjær (b. 1992) graduated from the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in 2022. He also has a background as a DJ and a degree in Music Management from the Rhythmic Music Conservatory (RMC). In his performances, installations and sculptures, he examines identity among his own generation and explores the role of popular culture and technology in determining our experience of community and freedom. Esben Weile Kjær has had several solo shows, including at Kunstforeningen GL STRAND and at Copenhagen Contemporary, and has shown his works internationally at Museum Tinguely in Basel, Centre Pompidou in Paris and Berghain in Berlin. Esben Weile Kjær has most recently been featured in the group exhibition *Another Surrealism* at Den Frie in Copenhagen and presented the installation *HYPHER!* at the BFI in Miami. In 2022, he received the Carl Nielsen and Anne Marie Carl-Nielsen's Foundation's talent award.

BUTTERFLY! ARKEN's collection curated by Esben Weile Kjær will be exhibited from 10 February to 31 December 2023.

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