

What does it take to maintain a body? To keep it clean and healthy and young in running order running smoothly running fast at peak performance constantly improving outrunning outwitting outwinning. Do you do doctors check-ups blood tests MRI scans ultrasound scans do you nervously wait for results in hieroglyphs that you painstakingly decipher do you hang on every word do you do as you're told to do to be a better you the best of you the best of the best you can be? Why not simply start at the beginning. *An apple a day...*

If Tanja Nis-Hansen has previously made the non-productive, non-effective body the subject of her painting – horizontal bodies in repose, waiting rooms and vortexes inviting us to take a step and plunge into an endless state of falling – what is at stake now is quite simply a question of staying well. Well enough to function and contribute to the well-oiled machine taskforce of society. Fall below these basic requirements and you're out. *A is for apple*. Nis-Hansen therefore presents us with just that – larger-than-life portraits of gleaming, sweaty, sexy, curvaceous apples, straining against the confines of the picture frame, facing off one another and threatening to burst into and disrupt the serenity of the gallery space. Isolated and decontextualised, they become stand-ins for the body, containers for desire, desperation and regret, for anything that you want them to be. *Are you ready to get healthy?* If only it was as simple as that.

The apple as a symbol of knowledge and wisdom that was once upon a time promised to us transforms into a daily reminder that actually we know fuck all. Nis-Hansen's decision to literally paint an apple a day can be interpreted then as an attempt to address the neoliberal understanding that has been forced on to us, that the responsibility for our well-being lies in our own hands. Yet, this daily exercise of self-betterment also proposes another question for our consideration: what is there still to be extracted from this most generic of images? The apple of Cranach's Adam and Eve or Caravaggio's Bacchus now become as ubiquitous as the logo on our phones or a pop hit to be danced along to on TikTok. The forbidden fruit that promises everything and gives nothing. Are Nis-Hansen's canvases the painterly equivalent of doing one hundred push-ups a day?

For the apple connoisseur, it may come as no surprise that the green tones of the artist's chosen fruit, sporting occasional flecks of yellow and gold, are those of the Granny Smith. The product of an accidental breeding in 19th century convict-era Australia, the Granny Smith became known for its durability, a perfect body that progressively squeezed out less reliable, lesser performing native breeds. As an origin story, it exalts loud and clear *don't mess with the competition*. As if to footnote this sad state of affairs, Nis-Hansen has included a series of small-format paintings of birds, the common denominator being that these are all extinct or endangered species, flightless specimens that could not outrun the manmade cause of their demise. Painting, as an accumulation of surplus value, consumes, absorbs and effaces.

Elsewhere, other hints abound to remind us that we're trapped in a never-ending cycle that demands us to excel to perform to shine bright. A theatre spotlight focuses its gleaming eye on us while one of Nis-Hansen's word paintings spells out STAGE 3 in overlapping all caps. A measurement of how far an illness has progressed, how close a species is to the point of no return, or simply the fact that this is Nis-Hansen's third exhibition with sans titre. The closest we get to the core of the issue is an image of an apple sliced neatly in half, its fragile innards staring back at us, helplessly. As if to drive the point home, in another painting, an apple slice, lying on its side, takes on the facial characteristics of its author. In order to avoid the Dodo's fate, keep running keep painting.

Anya Harrison

*Tanja Nis-Hansen (born in 1988, Denmark) lives and works in Berlin. She studied in Copenhagen and Vienna before achieving both her BFA (2016) and MFA (2018) at the Academy of Fine Arts, Hamburg under the supervision of professor Jutta Koether.*

*In 2026, the artist will have three solo shows at Kasseler Kunstverein Museen, Kassel; Five Churches, Los Angeles and OTP, Copenhagen. Previous solo exhibitions include Galerie im Turm, Berlin (with Yen Chun Lin) (2024); Solito - Galleria S2, Naples (2023); palace enterprise, Copenhagen (2023); Vestjyllands Kunstpavillon, Videbæk (2022); Sans titre, Paris (2025, 2022 and 2019); Udstillingsstedet Sydhavn Station, Copenhagen (2019); HfBK, Hamburg (2018); Come Over chez Malik's, Hamburg (2017).*

*Her work has been shown in group exhibitions at ICAT – HFBK Hamburg (2024); OTP Copenhagen (2024); Harkawik, New York (2024); Condo at Union Pacific, London (2024); Mécènes du Sud, Montpellier (2023); Belenius, Stockholm (2023);*

*Rundetårn, Copenhagen (2022); Sans titre, Paris (2022 & 2019); June, Berlin (2022); L'INCONNUE, New York (2021); SORT, Vienna (2019); Crum Heaven, Stockholm (2019); AEDT, Düsseldorf (2019); Rumpelstiltskin, New York (2018); Kunsthaus Hamburg (2018); Galleria Federico Vavassori, Milan (2018); Munchener Kammerspiele, Munich (2018); Der Tank, Institut Kunst HGK FHNW, Basel (2018); Halle für Kunst Lüneburg (2017); Galerie der HfBK, Hamburg (2016); Godsbanen, Aarhus (2015) and Parallel Vienna, Vienna (2014).*

*The artist recently received a grant from the Danish Arts Foundation and was awarded the Neue Kunst Hamburg grant with Niclas Riepshoff (with whom she forms the duo CONNY) and a grant by the Danish Art Council in 2019, after being nominated for the Hamburger Arbeitsstipendium, the Hiscox Kunstpreis and the Schues Nachwuchsförderung all in 2018.*

*Tanja Nis-Hansen's works are featured in the permanent collection of the Danish Arts Foundation and the New Carlsberg Foundation.*

*Anya Harrison is a curator and writer based in Montpellier, France. Since 2019, she is curator at MO.CO. Montpellier Contemporain where she has organised solo presentations of Betty Tompkins (2021), Marilyn Minter (2021), Max Hooper Schneider (2022), Aurélien Potier (2024) and Ivana Basic (2025), as well as thematic group exhibitions, the most recent being Sense Unknown (2025), where failure, accident and error are prisms for a continual pursuit of the unknown. Previously, she has worked with Le Bicolore - La Maison de Danemark (Paris, 2023), the Kosovo Pavilion - 58th Venice Biennale (2019) and the Baltic Triennial 13 (2017-2018).*