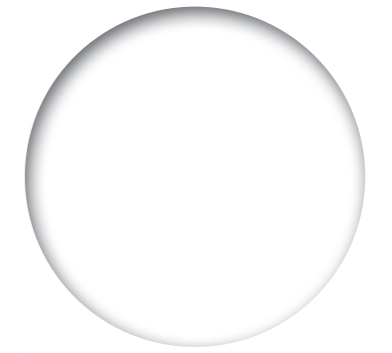


FLOORPLAN



New Works

New Works is a solo exhibition by Nina Beier. Beier takes off from the distinctive ethos of the artists' institute, creating an entirely new body of work. The exhibition is accompanied by a text from Kristian Vistrup Madsen, offering a fresh perspective on Beier's evolving artistic practice.

Nina Beier (b. 1975 in Denmark)

Nina Beier's work has been the subject of survey exhibitions at CAPC in France (2024); Kiasma in Finland (2024); Tamayo Museum in Mexico (2024) and recent large-scale installations have been installed at Mudam in Luxembourg (2024); Art Sonje Center in Seoul (2023); Haus am Waldsee in Berlin (2023); the Lyon Biennale in France (2022); the Busan Biennale in Korea (2022); the Highline in New York (2022); the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles (2022); Pinacoteca Agnelli in Turin (2022); the São Paulo Biennial in Brazil (2021).

A solo exhibition by

Nina Beier

14.03–26.04.2025
Thu–Sat, 13.00–18.00

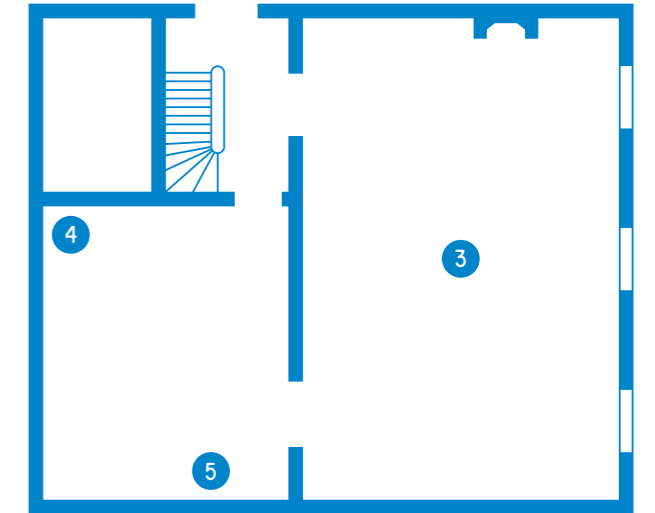
About Woonhuis

Situated within the former caretaker quarters of De Ateliers, Woonhuis hosts an exhibition space. With its own separate entrance and approximately 200 m² of project space, Woonhuis programmes exhibitions and events featuring (inter)national artists, all by invitation of De Ateliers participants. Access via the right side of De Ateliers, Stadhouderskade 86, Amsterdam.

Woonhuis receives generous support from Ammodo and AFK. This exhibition is supported by the Danish Art Foundation.

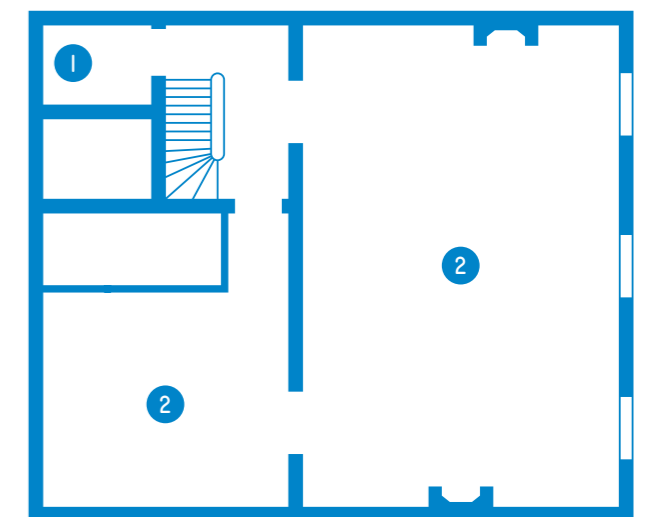


FLOOR 2

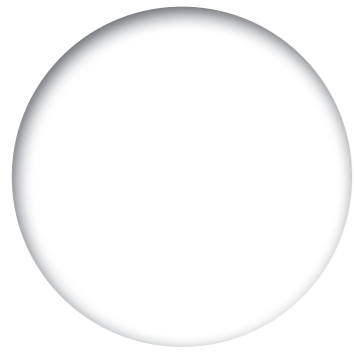


- 3 *Sculpture*, 2025
Marble, toilet paper rolls, kitchen paper rolls
- 4 *Trimmed Bush*, 2025
Trimmed bush
- 5 *Sunset*, 2025
Tequila, grenadine, orange juice, orange, glas

FLOOR 1



- 1 *Buddy*, 2025
Restless leg
- 2 *Old Friends*, 2025
Cornetto-style ice creams



Tick-tock

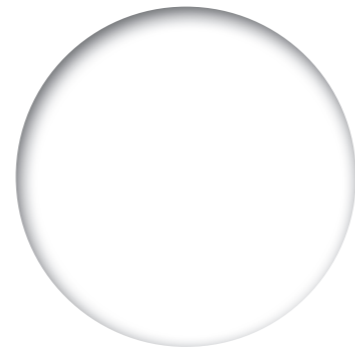
On the exhibition *New Works*, by Nina Beier
By Kristian Vistrup Madsen

In between the street and the artists' studios of the post academic institution De Ateliers, is an exhibition space called Woonhuis. The public enter from the street, and from the studio, the participants of De Ateliers. These groups have different aims that only sometimes overlap; different relationships to the artist and the artwork as it is presented in that exhibition space, cleaved in between these spheres as if between a frame's back and its glass. If the artist speaks with two faces, one towards the street and another towards the studios, it is, as in the story of Janus, less that one face speaks truth and the other doesn't, and more that, in the cacophony, truth dissolves altogether. Truth? Reality? Janus is god of beginning *and* end; god of two-way streets; god of fractured notions.

Last year, Nina Beier was inaugurated into the category of mid-career artist with a series of survey exhibitions. The mid-career survey is a structuring device; it is a process by which things – artworks, biography, exhibitions – are put into place, each onto its own shelf, the narrative that connects them streamlined, language harnessed. It is now possible to read the first half of the story about the artist Nina Beier and follow the plot from beginning to provisional end. But what this structure also enables, of course, is a post-structure. The messing up of the order. I wonder if that cut between the studios and the street, between what is emerging and what has arrived, is not also a cut through which the work can bleed, once again, out of its own form?

The interstitial nature of Woonhuis makes it a portal, as Beier's works, too, can be experienced as points of contact with a potentially slightly other world – an off-world, the same as ours only from an oblique angle. As in the beginning of David Lynch's *Blue Velvet* where the protagonist Jeffrey finds a severed ear in the grass, the camera zooming in on it, almost entering it, as white noise rises to a roaring mass. The ear is a gateway to the off-world of cherry-coloured interiors and twisted, violent forms of desire. It takes us to a place that was there all along.

Lynch and Beier share in their preoccupation with image-making, the process of flattening involved in the manufacture of iconicity. As such, their worlds might

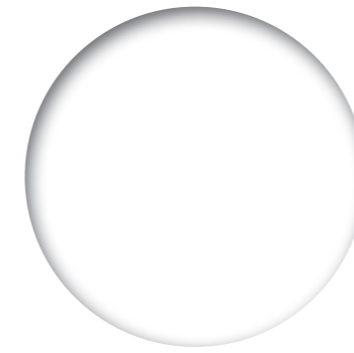


seem at first overwhelmingly visual. But it is an ear that Jeffrey finds on the ground – not an eye. To access the off-world we have to listen for it. Listen closely, and in Beier's exhibition you will hear the repetitive rhythm of a restless leg, a task as well as a form of affect projected onto the participants of the De Ateliers here acting as invigilators. This restless leg is the sound of nervousness or impatience, a mechanical body like the ticking of a clock, though here less a keeper of time than one shoving it along, breathing down its neck. To enter into Beier's work through the ear, not by seeing but by listening, is to install a certain tension into the seeing that comes after the hearing.

The restless leg of the invigilator is related to previous instances in Beier's work such as young men chain smoking in *Pack* (2012), or actors exercising their ability to cry on command in *Drama* (2019). These would seem to be instances of manipulation, where the relation between impulse and expression is deliberately disrupted – smoking not as habit but as choreography; crying unattended by emotion. They could be seen as displays of falsehood, deceit, perversions of behavioural language into artifice. Depersonalised, these acts become image-spectacles: youth versus death drive – watch the live performance! Sadness – see it for yourself!

But in another piece of the same strain – *The Complete Works* (2009) – retired dancers perform fragments of their repertoire relying on memory alone. Here the recital speaks of integrity, of movement become one with body and mind as extensions of the self. Let's remember that it is through repetition that knowledge is acquired. Movements, crying, speech, art: all know-how comes back to this form of practice, which unhinges impulse from expression, a word from the thing it describes. Beier herself has pinned her interest to "the transitional moment in an object's status, when we can suddenly see it for what it is, when it becomes a vehicle for its own history." Lodged in this moment is both the origins of the object's meaning as well as its post-structure, the potential that it might be different from what we think.

Important to note about Lynch is that he does not trade in metaphor or analogy. We are not to read films like *Blue Velvet* as "comments" on the real world, but at face value, as part of reality itself. And this is the main point I want to make in bringing Lynch up in relation to Beier: her objects are not stand-ins for discourse, they quite simply *are*. But can we wrap our heads around the fact that ice

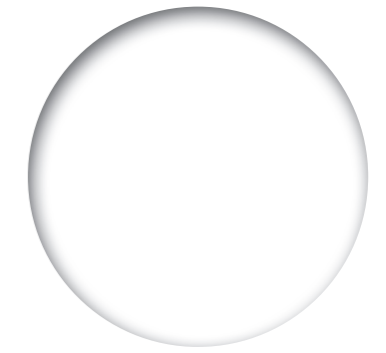


cream doesn't fully melt, that seeds can be enormous and erotically anthropomorphic, that trees come in perfect triangles like formations of migratory birds in the sky – that the world is *actually* so strange, so remarkable? Many of these things, we have made. Us, human-magicians. In the Tarot deck the magician is sometimes portrayed as an artist, other times plainly as a man, the animal known for creative manipulations that move nature off its course.

In the encounter with the unmelting Cornetto-style ice creams, repetition makes a pattern – an art. Already repetitions of an established trademark, itself an echo of some more homegrown version of ice cream, in Beier's arrangement the dropped cones live as images, utilised for their ability to resist decay. Wonder can be said to be the outcome of repetition in the way that repeating the same word over and over again makes it lose its meaning, transforming it into an incantation that summons the soul at the same time as it conjures a new space of emptiness, makes an ornament of pure sound. In the orthodox church, icons are said to be written, and compositions are repeated in the same way that Catholics repeat the Ave Maria. It is repetition on an industrial scale that has made this ice cream not melt, and it is repetition as formal strategy that now disappears its function, and turns it into a vehicle for itself.

Such being for itself affords the object a special power – a grave question mark now hovers over reality: Ought ice cream really melt? Is it so unnatural for it not to? Ice cream, anyway, is hardly a natural occurrence. Repetition and non-melting combined in the Cornetto simultaneously keep time and bring it to a halt – a gesture in competition with the restless leg; with the myriad proverbial clocks ticking across Beier's practice. How many cigarettes in a lifetime, for each one ten minutes less, until the life is cancelled out completely? How many ice cream cones all laid out in a room, flattened, unmelting, add up to a life? And then what do we learn? What other dimension of knowledge is contained by this form of bookkeeping?

Blue Velvet takes the structure of a Bildungsroman. Jeffrey comes to realise for the first time that the world is not what he thought it was – that it need not be; that twisted, frightening, beautiful things are real. And even though order is restored and suburban paradise regained as a red robin lands on the window sill, the exaggerated mechanical look of the bird tells us that there is no normal to return to. Whether or not Jeffrey chooses to see that – to hear it – from this point on, is his decision. The same



realisation seems to permeate Beier's Cornettos, even as numbers increase and time passes, in each iteration with equal force: the lesson is a perpetual one.

And so, slid in between the studios and the street, between practices caught in flux and those of the established, surveyed, mid-career order, is an educational situation. But one in which the textbook always seems to open onto the same blank page. The tombstone books that Beier has laid onto an all but invisible plinth of toilet and kitchen roll cardboard cylinders are solid and mute. How much of death, the solemnity of ritual, of religious teaching and existential feeling is left in these objects, transposed to this new situation? And how much was there to begin with?

Here knowledge is an endpoint; the tombstone to the emerging artist's pure potential. Its stubborn gravity, so heavy on the horizon of the floor, seems to question what it is possible for life, art, time to amount to, anyway. Wisdom, finitude, mortality – whatever it is that we see in this stone – is, as ever in Beier's work, undercut by repetition and arrangement, by context. What we see is a vanity picture that shows not the fleeting nature of life but the deadening persistence of materiality alongside the radical instability of signs. Her sculpture *Island* (2024) – marble kitchen counter tops laid out in a garden, grass growing through the holes cut out for sinks – has more of the funereal to it than these actual tombstones. A sense of vertigo at the slippage, the simultaneous connection and disjunction between these two works. How flexible is this monster, language, how malleable our so-called reality? A stone book for each life, but how many marble counter tops, how many toilet rolls?

What remains from Jeffrey's adventure is the texture of a nightgown made of blue velvet, the song of the same name and the lingering note of distress that follows it. In this off-world, ice cream doesn't melt just as time does not pass but accumulates, and once you've caught sound of it, it never really goes quiet again. There'll always be that restless leg, the hollowness of rehearsed movements and strangely steady eyes behind a film of tears; you'll always find that building wedged in between studios and street to say that everything could have been – and is always already – entirely otherwise.