

Creature

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A Text by Anne Meerpohl

Shimmering, patterned textiles streak across the room, connecting the canvases and obscuring the view from the entrance. It's as though the canvases are connected by voices, engaged in a visual, material dialogue with each other. As a visitor, one enters this scene directly, perhaps interrupting this exchange between the paintings. Through their interconnectedness, the canvases appear as communicative entities, forming an event of their own. Broken down into individual beings, they seem to refer to something not yet tangible — a creature in hiding, possibly lurking around the next corner, secretly observing us as we observe the room. Between the more discernible figures lie uncertain wisps of a potential narrative. The creature eludes us, disappearing between the floorboards.

Moments like this appear and disappear. Through movement and interaction, a path of exploration opens up. Social situations emerge between toy-like images and objects that inhabit the rooms in assemblages, much like moods or personalities inhabit one's own body. The space becomes a stage to be played upon, the artworks like scattered game pieces. The effect is a constant tug-of-war: a dynamic negotiation between the impulses of an inner child and the rationale of a trained professional striding through the gallery.

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As a teenager, I dreamed of living on a farm, or even a riding stable. But I dreamed less about life with the animals, the work and the land, and more about the potential experiences it might bring me – the adventures and stories worthy of a young adult novel that could be had there.

Meadows and fields fly past the window of our parents' car. Christina Aguilera blares from the CD player in the stuffy interior. We sing along, arms dancing above our heads, fingers brushing against the grey, stained fabric covering on the ceiling. S. needs to go to the toilet, so a little later we make a stop. Each of us gets to choose an ice cream, but we have to eat it at the picnic table by the playground next to the McDonald's at the petrol station – no more stains in the car. We take the opportunity to share the last few fruit juices in Tetra Paks and mourn briefly for the Multi flavour that fell in the sand, and the forgotten stuffed rabbit.

Fifteen years later, we are sitting at the rest stop again, getting ice cream, devouring it on the bus, and despite, or perhaps precisely because of, the time that has passed, Christina has crept back into one of our playlists. Once we arrive, we slice bread, stir salad dressings and continue singing along. S. tells me to sprinkle a dash of lemon juice on the mashed avocado along with salt and pepper, and it tastes great. In the meantime, we fall quiet. The time we spent together when we were young and now a little older is palpable in these familiar silences, a quiet gathering of warm feelings. The dream of living on a farm has become more a wishful, fleeting fantasy: a possibility of losing oneself in thought, surrounded by familiar and unfamiliar faces.

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I nibble carefully at the last pieces of bright orange flesh on the nectarine stone with the tips of my front teeth, and some juice drips over my fingers into the palm of my hand. With deliberate but jerky movements, my tongue catches it. A dull thud sounds as I throw the stone with its frayed skin towards the bushes. 'Haha,' I hear from the towel next to me. A broad grin and a triumphant expression await me when I turn around. 'I threw it further!' We continue our competitiveness in the cool water of the lake, bickering over the glittering inflatable ring, which we take turns climbing through and jumping from, splashing water into each other's laughing faces. A beautiful afternoon.

As always, after a day spent together, I feel a deep sadness when I arrive back in my flat and sit scrolling through the day's photos. Staring at my phone and brooding over these relationships and memories often puts me in a melancholic mood, as they splinter into a thousand facets like the view through a kaleidoscope. But again and again, a realisation that although we are finite, we are here.