

The Artist Is a Drop in the Ocean

On the Artistic Practice of Jørund Aase

Imagine walking through the forest. Along the path you notice a series of abandoned objects. You see two wooden sticks tied together in a cross with a piece of string. You see a small metal tube, a red toy car, and a tiny plastic animal. You continue and come across a fragment of a concrete cylinder and a coil of colorful electrical wires. On the ground you spot a worn-out mattress. It has taken on brownish hues after lying outside for a long time. Its fibers are beginning to disintegrate, forming a torn, chaotic surface. There are no people in sight, and although some of the objects are recognizable, they seem to belong to a past—or perhaps, paradoxically, a future.

This imagined post-apocalyptic scene is an attempt to describe Jørund Aase's production. His artistic practice is surrounded by a kind of ambivalence, where the materials he uses seem to come from a future in which they have become remnants of a collapsed civilization. Nature is slowly reclaiming the terrain, while abandoned objects find their place in an unexpected symbiosis. Aase is preoccupied with the idea that we live at the edge of something new, a time that demands preparedness—of materials, food, and water. For many of us, this has become part of everyday life: water containers have been purchased, batteries and camping stoves stand ready in the basement. Aase, however, has taken this further. He has turned preparedness into a lived practice. This is reflected not least in the way he cultivates the soil where he lives with self-sufficiency in mind.

It is perhaps in this very duality between practical readiness and existential uncertainty that Aase articulates his own sense of wonder about the world. "I think it's fantastic and mysterious, because we don't really know what nature is in any way," Aase remarks in conversation. He goes on to say that although the world is right in front of us, and we live in it, we cannot fully grasp it. And at the same time, when art is created, or when we are asked to see, experience, and interpret it, the notion easily arises that the artist has somehow surpassed the world.

Aase emphasizes that he has no ambitions of surpassing the world. His art must instead be understood as part of the inexhaustible and wondrous reality that the world is. "The artist is a tiny drop in the ocean," he says, but adds that he aims to create art that holds the mystery of the world. For him, it is about something as simple as existing, being present.

One way Aase attempts to come closer to the world's own force is by involving processes of chance, both mechanical and biological. He sets up certain frameworks where the unintended is allowed to unfold. In some objects made from thermoplastic glue, it is precisely this exchange between the will of the material and the will of the artist that plays out. Aase begins with a basic form and lets chance shape the outcome. The surface clumps together in ways that cannot be planned, and these accidents contribute to the organic expression. Aase describes the process as an imitation of nature; how living things grow and take shape in endless complexity. His aesthetic is understated, almost invisible, and it often lies in the sensitivity he has toward ordinary materials.

The exhibition includes the photograph *Back in the Garden*. The image points to the relationship between the artificial and the natural, a recurring theme in many of Aase's works. We see an elderly couple photographed from behind in the botanical garden in Berlin. They are surrounded

by palm-like trees and are looking at a small brown pond before them. Aase says that he sees a reference to Adam and Eve in the picture, contemplating the world as it has now become. Even though it is a constructed environment, there is something unfathomable there, he adds. Something remains beyond understanding. It is as if the couple in the garden are observing the primordial “soup” of life—its very beginning.

In Aase’s work there is no ambition to explain the world, only an attempt to draw closer to it. The materials are allowed to carry their own stories. Forms arise in the tension between intention and chance, and the viewer is invited to linger rather than to understand. In this way, the art appears not as an answer but as a quiet presence—part of the same immeasurable whole as the world itself.

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