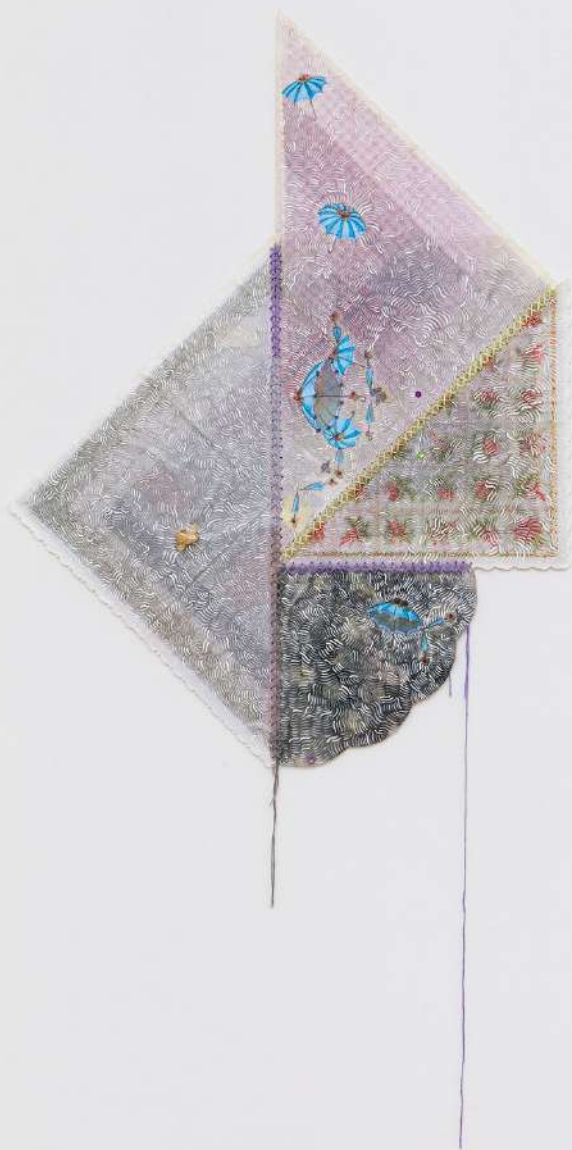


JEAN-CLAUDE MAIER



SÓLEY RAGNARSDÓTTIR

JEAN-CLAUDE MAIER IS A GALLERY  
FOR CONTEMPORARY ART  
IN FRANKFURT, GERMANY.  
THE PROGRAM IS CHARACTERIZED  
BY A MULTI-PERSPECTIVE  
THOUGHT-PROVOKING APPROACH.



Exhibition view



DOT, DOT, DOT

SÓLEY  
RAGNARS-  
DÓTTIR



## DOT, DOT, DOT.

### ON RELATIONALISM AND RAPTURED WORLDS

In the year 2000, a momentous concept of geology was introduced to the world: The age of the Anthropocene was proclaimed by researchers Paul Crutzen and Eugene F. Stroemer. The geochronological period that is to follow the Holocene places humankind - hence the prefix 'anthropo-', ancient Greek for 'human' - in the foreground as a geological agent that has significantly changed nature and the climate through its life and the corresponding interventions in the environment. The concept of the Anthropocene also concerns the humanities, which ask about the relationship between humankind and the world. Culture and nature are no longer juxtaposed diametrically; what is at stake is a much more complex interconnectedness. The perspective that the concept of the Anthropocene holds can provide categories of analysis for the present - but can it also provide visions for the future? In 2016, the feminist scholar Donna Haraway outlined an utopian counter-concept, the Chthulucene. It derives from the

Greek chthonios, which translates as 'belonging to the earth, the soil'. Haraway proposes to decenter humanity and seek a new relationality to other living beings. Instead of assuming notions of a collective 'we', which is opposed by nature and the environment, invisible connections to other living beings are to be sought. In this way, another world can be designed. In her first solo exhibition 'Dot, dot, dot', the artist Sóley Ragnarsdóttir dedicates herself to a similar search for relationality, namely symbiosis as an overarching subject: from arts to crafts, through humans to animals, from ornament to line, she dissolves polarities and asks for profound, preposterous relationships.

Two eyes, one red, the other light yellow, stare aimlessly. On the fibrous orange-grey background are the drawn outlines of a hunting dog, the Irish Red Setter, with its prey, a rabbit. At first glance, the line drawing appears sleek and reduced; small, playful spirals on the animal's ears and fur seem ornamental. The outlines are filled by the multi-layered background, which is framed with sunflower seeds that are concisely arranged and sprinkled with fine glass beads. Ragnarsdóttir's painting can be read as a foreshadowing of



Installation view

her artistic practice: Her encounter with the medium is sculptural in its approach and goes beyond a classical understanding of materials. Rather, her works appear interested in a heterogeneous combination of a wide variety of materials. For Irish Setter with Rabbit 2, the artist built a large stretcher frame, which she wove with orange mohair wool and synthetic glitter wool. Instead of linen, a plastic sheet was stretched on the front to consequently cast it backwards with plaster. This method, which the artist developed herself, creates the uneven, multidimensional surface on which the drawing of the hunt lies. To conclude, the artist poured epoxy resin over the entire surface, fixing the delicate materials,

and hardening the surface glassily. The work brims with polar nuances. Simple lines lose themselves in dreamy ornaments, empty eyes open up a lively pictorial space, synthetic thread and warm wool shimmer through tangled beige plaster. The resin connects them, alienating their placement into a nonchalant artefact, as if everything had always belonged together like this. The painting materialises itself disorderly, following its own principles of order. In this way, Ragnarsdóttir produces symbiotic material links with which she questions and dissolves common paradigms of art and cultural theory. Ornamentation does not contradict distinct lines. The eyes, often interpreted as



the soul's entrance to a painting, deny entry. The overlapping layers equally offer a differing view on the possibilities of painting: the canvas is not overcome - why should it be? - but becomes the supporting medium in a literal sense, namely that of an artefact, that dissolves male fantasies of hunting and naturalness (hunting as a 'natural' population control and leisure activity of white men) in wayward material choices. Ragnarsdóttir's work oscillates incessantly in confrontations between humans as geological agents and counter-designs to this, without losing sight of the artistic play with medium and genre. This simultaneity of (biological) ethics and aesthetics intertwines in a dance that offers the viewer the potentialities of both different fields and opens the sphere of dreamy utopias.

The simultaneous being is also found in *Untitled*. It has a classic, simple stretcher frame. Covered with the same red dots as the translucent surface made of epoxy resin, the frame is an inherent part of the work through the repetition of colours and shapes. Instead of marking the works' border, it is playfully included as a material of painting. *Untitled* takes up the idea of layers and

superimpositions anew. The several poured layers of epoxy resin consist of rhythmic paper cuttings, wood, amber, shells, and red dots, above and between, again and again. Dot, dot, dot. Ragnarsdóttir describes this step-by-step process as an organising principle, namely the organisation of knowledge, colours and forms. Like a matrix, a kind of collage of her thoughts and the procedure, the artworks allow us to read their multi-layeredness through the visible layers, which dwell in their own cosmos: Even if the epoxy resin shines and shimmers like glass, we cannot see ourselves reflected in it. The illusion of reflection is passé, a new world opens up that eradicates self-view and demands entry into its own reality.

Another series of works in the exhibition 'Dot, dot, dot' are the napkins, which tie in with parameters of previous works. Napkins are used for different reasons, in different contexts. For the purpose of cleansing after a meal, they are purely functional, but much more often they serve to decorate and to display manners, for example, placing the napkin on the lap and discreetly blotting the mouth. With different designs for every conceivable

occasion, they serve as an object to be interpreted and used as a testament to refinement and taste. The variable price range allows for use across classes, especially for the use as a social testimony. The several designs and easy accessibility make the napkin a popular collector's item. With her series of works, Sóley Ragnarsdóttir picks up on an inherited transgenerational practice of her own family: For decades, family members collected napkins, which the artist now contextualises in her own visual language. Folded in half, she sews differently patterned and shaped napkins together into a new form for *Untitled*. They are each doused with epoxy resin, making them translucent; the henceforth overlapping patterns come together to form new, illusionistic formations. Repeating motifs by the artist are placed on the shiny surface: large blue eyes, ovals and curved shapes painted with fine lines, red dots, small glittering gemstones. The bold cross-stitches and epoxy resin form protective elements of cohesion, linking past and present, family collection and artistic reflection. Ragnarsdóttir's painterly handwriting on the napkins becomes her inscription into the family tradition. Instead of overwriting it, she opens

up a new surface for her painting with the layer of epoxy resin; the visualisation of the two halves lying on top of each other run into each other to form new kinds of ornaments; old forms are linked into a larger whole. In this visualisation and simultaneous alienation of the collected objects, Ragnarsdóttir opens up an archive of design and ornamentality, familiarity and strangeness, past and present.

Staying with the Trouble. These words form the title of Haraway's book, in which she proposes Chthulucene as a utopian blueprint of the world. One can think of Ragnarsdóttir's works in this light: Remain playful. Family archive meets artistic handwriting, fine brushwork meets natural materials, plaster and resin and thread play. Always interested in moments of symbiosis, in the spaces in between that bridge polarities and fill new surfaces, the artist leads us without dogma through the valleys of ethics and aesthetics that are mirrored in unexpected relationalities and unfold raptured worlds.

TEXT BY SEDA PESEN



PHOTO BY NEVEN ALLGEIER



SÓLEY RAGNARSDÓTTIR'S ARTISTIC PRACTICE HAS A SCULPTURAL STARTING POINT, MIXING VARIOUS NATURAL AND SYNTHETIC MATERIALS IN SYMBIOSIS ON THE CANVAS, SWAYING BETWEEN FIGURATION AND ABSTRACTION. IN A PLAY BETWEEN THE DICHOTOMIES OF ARTS AND CRAFTS, NATURE AND CULTURE, HUMANS AND ANIMALS, RAGNARSDÓTTIR CREATES AESTHETICALLY APPEALING ARTWORKS THAT DEAL DECISIVELY WITH QUESTIONS OF THE CONCEPT OF NATURE AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO HUMANKIND.

RAGNARSDÓTTIR (B. 1991) LIVES AND WORKS IN THY IN NORTHERN JUTLAND, DENMARK. SHE STUDIED AT STÄDELSCHULE, FRANKFURT IN 2014-19 UNDER THE PROFESSORSHIPS OF AMY SILLMAN, MONIKA BAER AND NIKOLAS GAMBAROFF.

UPCOMING SOLO EXHIBITION BY THE ARTIST:

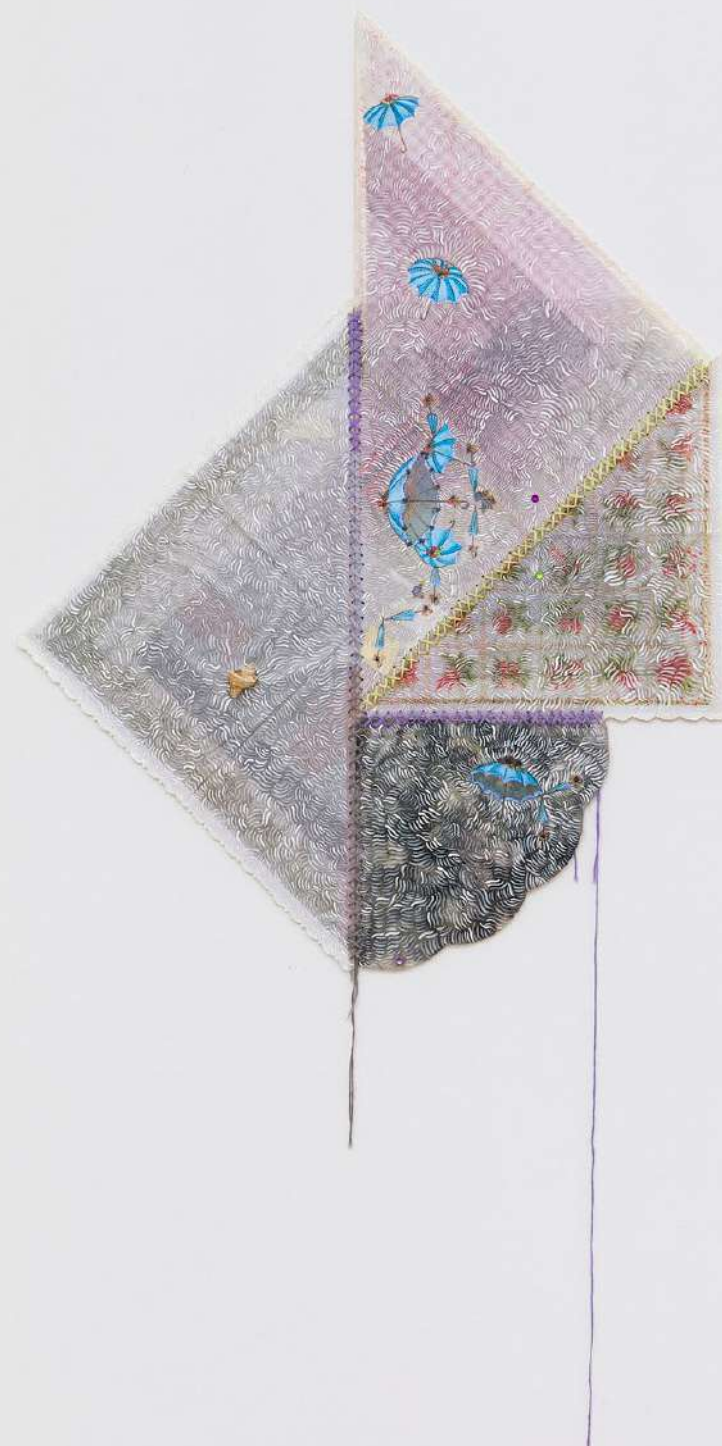
OVERGADEN, COPENHAGEN  
NOVEMBER 5 – DECEMBER 31, 2021

# DOT, DOT, DOT. THE WORKS

PHOTOS BY IVAN MURZIN



Untitled, 2021  
Acrylic, napkins, beads, shells, epoxy, cotton  
67 x 50 cm





Untitled, 2020  
Acrylic, paper cuts, wood, amber, shells  
30 x 22 cm

Side view





Untitled, 2021  
Acrylic, napkins, beads, epoxy, cotton  
57 x 46 cm



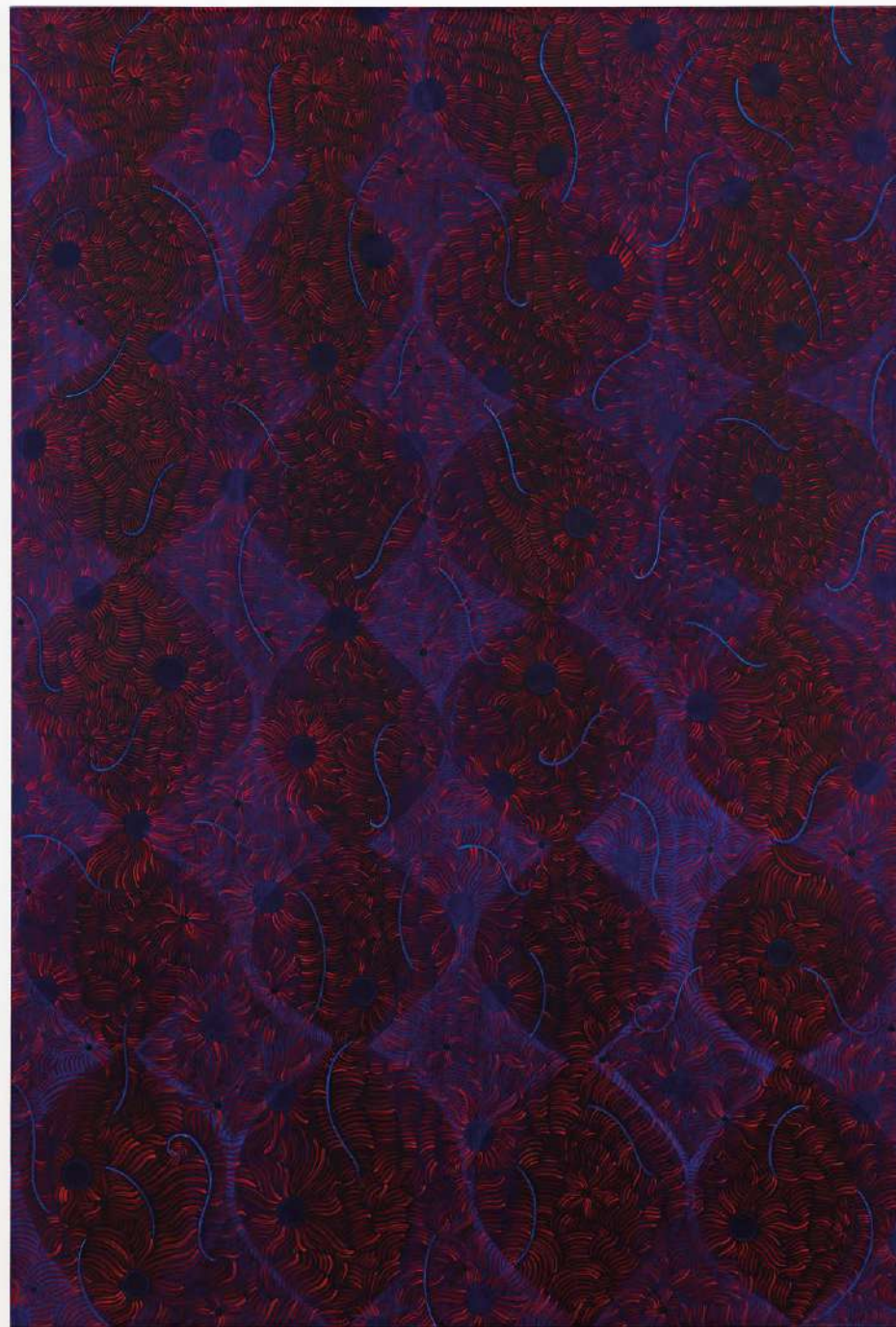
Detail view



Untitled, 2021  
Acrylic, napkins, beads, shells, epoxy, cotton  
60 x 40 cm



Untitled, 2021  
Acrylic on canvas  
200 x 135 cm

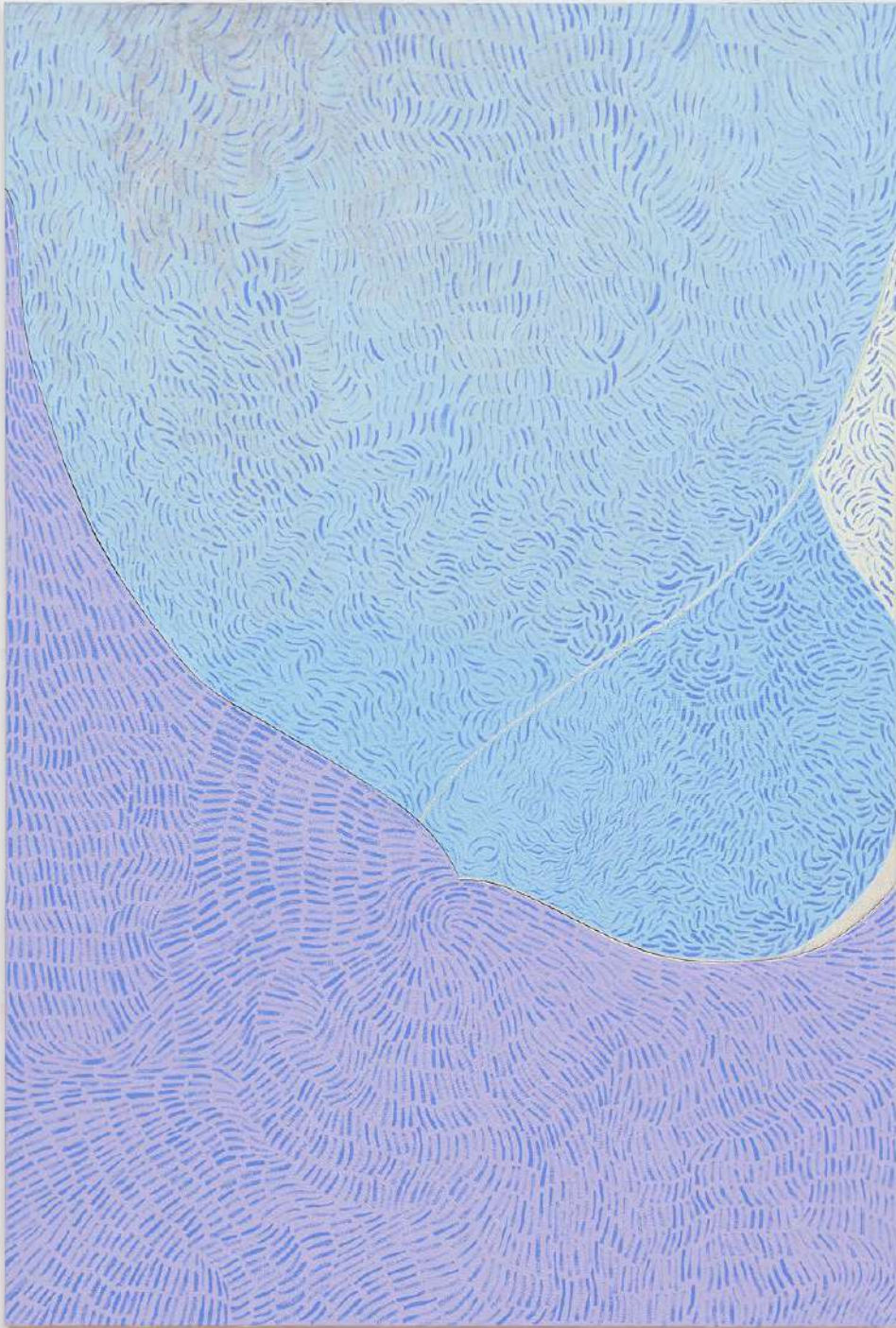


Detail view



Irish Setter and Rabbit, 2019  
Acrylic, sunflower seeds, beads, epoxy, plaster, cotton, wood,  
129 x 90 cm





Untitled, 2019 – 2021  
Acrylic on canvas  
200 x 135 cm

Untitled, 2018  
Acrylic, plaster, beads, wood  
40 x 30 cm



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