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# At Home With Peter Ibsen

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Peter Ibsen is a leading figure in Copenhagen's art world. As a gallerist and art collector, he champions up-and-coming international talent and non-traditional artworks

which provoke thought and feeling - the more disturbing, the better.

His gallery, Sunday-S, is located in an old apartment. Its natural light and homely atmosphere create a contrast to the lifeless sterility that's often associated with gallery spaces. In fact, nothing about Peter's practice is devoid of life. His approach is passionate, devoted and inspiring.

In a conversation with THE SKATEROOM, Peter Ibsen tells us about his 25 years in the art world and the lessons it's taught him. We also compare the interior designs of his Copenhagen apartment and Summer home, learn about the turbulent history he shares with the paintings of Gregor HILDEBRANDT, and discuss skateboard art as a new trend amongst young collectors.

## Who are you and what do you do?

I'm a gallerist, art dealer and art collector. I've been collecting for over twenty-five years, as well as running an art blog for many years called Copenhagen Contemporary. It took off and, six years ago, I opened a gallery called Sunday-S. The space is an old apartment where international artists or collectors can stay if they are visiting. I have two rooms where I do shows, and two other rooms where I rotate my private collection. People are free to visit by appointment.

I had a traditional gallery before - neon lights, white walls and concrete floors, but something was missing. It didn't feel right. Sometimes you get tired of doing things the normal way, so I always want to do them differently. In the Summer, I do shows in the barn of my Summer house, or I do pop-ups in strange places... I always want to show art in a different setting. That's why I was looking for something like this apartment.



# What makes the difference when displaying art in a home-space rather than a traditional gallery space?

Sunday-S is a daylight gallery, it doesn't have any artificial light. Artworks present themselves best in natural light and in a setting which isn't as cold and sterile. A lot of people are scared of going into galleries, they're afraid of asking stupid questions while locked in these rooms. But here, it's more comfortable. It's like putting on a nice sweater. People stay here for over an hour whereas, in the former gallery, they would come in for a few minutes and be on their way. It's a much more relaxed way of looking

at art.





## Let's take it back to the beginning. How did you find yourself in the art world?

Completely coincidentally. Everything in life is unplanned. I was driving down one of the streets in Copenhagen, around 25 years ago. I was still studying and working as a bartender. I saw a painting in a window of a gallery and ran in wanting to buy it. It was sold already so I couldn't, but then I got to meet the artist in his studio. That's when I got addicted. I bought a painting from him and paid 1000 kr every month, because I didn't have money. Then, the next time I came, I fell in love with another painting and things just took off...

I never planned on becoming a gallerist - I actually planned on not becoming one. People say, "don't start a gallery if you want to make money" and that's for sure. But you do it because you have to. Because you cannot *not* do it.



## What do you look for in the artists and artworks that you curate?

In the first fifteen years, I was collecting mainly Danish artists. I had no clue what I was doing, I was just buying left and right. After that, I saw one of the paintings of Gregor Hildebrandt... and I really didn't like it. I thought, "this is not a painting, it's stupid." I had a tough time with it. I bought another painting at that show - a colorful, figurative painting that I would normally buy. When I came back to the gallery to pick it up, I asked the gallerist, "what about that black painting over there? Is it available?" The gallerist said, "yes, but you don't like it." I said, "but I have to have it." So I bought the painting by Hildebrandt instead. When I came home, I couldn't stand looking at all the other paintings I had. I sold them off quickly and started all over.

Now I look for very minimal, abstract, monochrome works that are not painted with traditional materials, but maybe a cassette tape, ashes, dust, ripped off paint... Always by young artists and never Danish. I also try not to have too many artists in my collection, but many works from each over the years, in order to support and collect in depth. Those are my guidelines.



# It seems like having that visceral, thought-provoking, even negative reaction to an artwork is also important to you.

We all make the same mistake - we fall in love with works that are pretty. We all want the nice, beautiful painting. It's like ice cream, it tastes good. But after a few months you start to question: "maybe I should've gone for the other one in the corner. The one that didn't really speak to me and that I didn't really like."

It's like when I do a show and I open with ten paintings, I always fall in love with nine of them immediately. And then there's that odd one out, that I don't really get and that I feel no one is going to like... But, after some time, that ends up being the one I remember most. It's always the ones that you don't understand. The ones that continue to poke you in the eye or hurt you in the stomach. Those are the ones I like.

## That's quite interesting advice for first-time collectors.

It's hard to believe it if you haven't tried it on yourself, but I always say to people - you should never buy the first painting you look at and really, *really* love.



# You own a Copenhagen apartment as well as a Summer house. What has been the design concept behind each of them?

They are two different worlds. The city apartment, much like the gallery, is very minimal and spacious. I need really quiet, clean lines where I live and I try not to surround myself with too many things. Also, I always prioritize vintage. I really go to lengths in order to not buy something new.

On the other hand, the Summer house is very dark and moody. There's a lot of wood, a fireplace, a big sofa, a TV (I don't have one in Copenhagen, I don't like them - they're ugly). The two spaces are like yin and yang - very different.

## How does each of them affect you?

The apartment in Copenhagen de-stresses me. It's calming to have this nothingness around me. From the Summer house, I get more creative energy. It's strange because, everytime I go there, I tell myself, "Okay, now I'm going to delete Instagram, I'm never going to open it again, I will put my phone away and not look at it." But, ten seconds later, I become so creative. I start discussing with artists, researching online, reading... In a way, the Summer house opens up my mind.

## For someone whose life and work focuses around art and design,

# Copenhagen itself must also be a very stimulating city. How does it influence your creativity?

The contrast between Winter and Summer is very powerful. We have so much darkness and rain here. Everyone is kind of depressed. But then, when you get to April, May - everyone is opening up. We have so few months of sun and light and it just recharges everyone. That's where you really discover the positive sides of Copenhagen.

Of course, we also have a lot of Scandinavian design. I personally don't collect Scandinavian design - I collect vintage furniture that's French or American... but being brought up in Copenhagen, you're just surrounded with design. It shapes you and the way you see things.



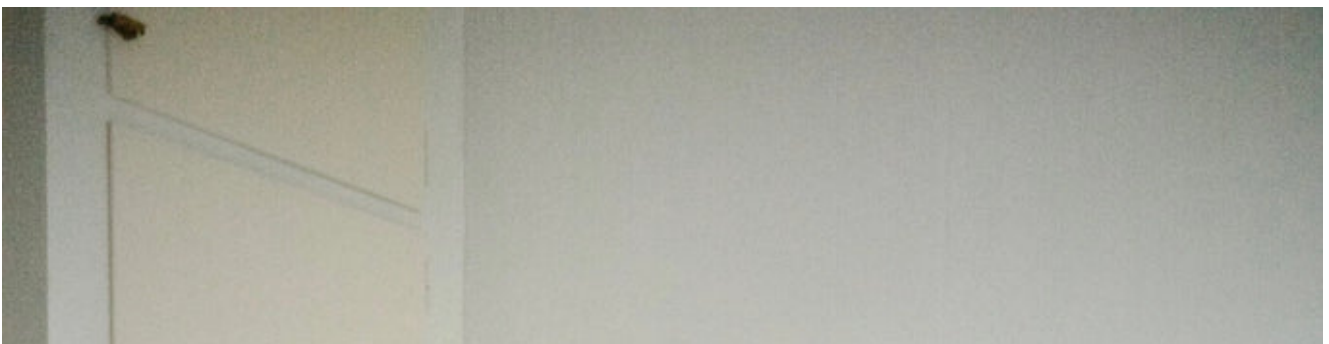
# Do you have favorite pieces of design right now?

I'm addicted to Donald Judd's chairs. I love them, even though they're super uncomfortable to sit on. But, a famous Danish designer once said, "I'd rather hurt my back than hurt my eyes." Chairs or tables don't have to be comfortable... but they should at least be good for the eyes.

# As a collector, what interested you in skateboard art?

It's a new thing for me to combine art and skateboarding. Art is creative, skateboarding is creative - it's a perfect mix. Two worlds which just make sense.

Skateboarding is very cool and affects mainly a younger demographic. Back in the day, art collectors were older - now that age group is getting younger and younger. People appreciate art and design, and they allocate a bigger budget towards it at an earlier age. You could buy small print editions on paper - which is nice, but maybe also boring, because that's what your parents had at home. You could invest in a big oil painting... *Or*, you could have a skateboard, with a painting on it. It has another twist to it. And it's not just flat - it's a sculpture, you can *feel* it.





# Are there any artists who you would recommend to collectors right now?

I only collect really, really young unknown artists, or very, very old forgotten artists. There's no in-between because that would be too easy. In Germany, there is this really young artist called Laura Killer who paints with fire. I discovered her because she's actually a student of Gregor Hildebrandt. She makes a broom with small matches, sets them on fire, and then goes over the canvas with this broom. We will probably do a small show with her this year.



## Your model of collecting is very

inspiring - you invest in art that makes you feel a personal and emotional connection, even if it might not show a very obvious value “on paper”.

It's not about the money and, in many cases, it's also not about what you see. It's about what you don't see. The idea, the concept, the material, the process... All these things that aren't obvious immediately.

If you understand a painting at first glance, then it doesn't leave you much more room to learn. If you immediately get 100% from it, then what else is there left to experience?

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