

Press Release
16 January 2025

Copenhagen Contemporary



Portrait of a planet on the brink

“I draw to see what I am thinking”, says British artist Emma Talbot, encapsulating her approach to art making. Opening on February 1st at Copenhagen Contemporary (CC), her exhibition *Are You a Living Thing That Is Dying or a Dying Thing That Is Living?* delves into questions of how to live and hope amidst ecological collapse. Through a series of new works, Talbot portrays the journey of a solitary figure navigating a chaotic, broken world and seeking meaning by undergoing profound personal transformation.

Press Preview:

A press preview will be held on January 31st from 11:00–12:00, with introduction by CC Director Marie Laurberg, Artist Emma Talbot and Senoir Curator Aukje Lepoutre Ravn. For registration, please contact mia@cphco.org

Download press material here: <https://copenhagencontemporary.org/en/presse/>

Emma Talbot

Are You a Living Thing That Is Dying or a Dying Thing That Is Living?

01.02. – 31.08.25

Delving into comprehensive themes like identity, feminism, transformation and ecology, Emma Talbot (b. 1969) is known for her deeply personal and narrative-driven works, which combine painting, drawing, animation and text with a distinctive sense of craft. Rooted in philosophical reflections on the contemporary state of the world, Talbot creates intricate, mesmerising universes that seek to convey the collective human experience of being alive today.

For CC, Talbot has created an exhibition that combines new and existing works shedding light on the human impact on nature and the consequences of the climate crisis. Spanning scenes of chaotic destruction, moments of ecological harmony and intimate explorations into animals' bodies, the exhibition explores interspecies connections, sustainability and human resilience in the face of ecological collapse.

Director of CC Marie Laurberg states: "Emma Talbot's exhibition raises a cry of alarm in an age of ecological disaster. Her works are infused with despair, desperation and loss of control, yet she pursues hope and resilience in the shared life forces of humans and animals."

Singular works made especially for CC

Several works in the exhibition have been created especially for CC, including two monumental silk paintings, each measuring 11 x 5 metres, and a new animation piece presented on a large LED screen. The exhibition includes three-dimensional textile works inspired by figures from Talbot's paintings, along with over 30 drawings that emphasize the central role of drawing in her practice.

The recurring protagonist in Talbot's works is a nude, faceless woman; a stand-in for the artist herself. In one of the large silk paintings, *Everything is Energy*, this figure navigates crumbled landscapes where polluted water and deadly radiation have decimated life. Amid this chaos, humanity struggles in a 'machine-room cell' to dominate the forces of nature, while the surrounding environment hints at nature's enduring power of regeneration.

As a counterpoint to the dystopia depicted in *Everything is Energy*, in the other large painting, *Are You a Living Thing That Is Dying or a Dying Thing That Is Living?* – also lending its title to the exhibition – a new vision of harmonious coexistence between people, plants and animals unfolds. Here, Talbot explores the human body's 'being in the world' as a consciousness transcending species boundaries; a heart can beat in sync with the rhythm of a plant, or a human figure can merge with the flowing currents of water. Together, these elements illustrate the profound interconnectedness and unity within the natural world.

In Talbot's latest animation *You Are Not the Centre (Inside the Animal Mind)*, the viewer enters the consciousness of a stray dog who has absorbed, through its sniffing nose, the spirit of a dying person. As the story unfolds, the human spirit experiences the world through the perspective of various animals, exploring their emotional and sensory lives – a shift that challenges the prevailing human-centric worldview.

Art as a call to action

The exhibition *Are You a Living Thing That Is Dying or a Dying Thing That Is Living?* takes the viewer on a metaphorical journey through the cycles of life, where moments of destruction and chaos give way to healing, renewal and transformation. Emma Talbot's distinctive artistic vision draws upon the interconnected history of humanity, nature, technology and the universe, weaving them into a profound reflection on the state of the world. Emphasizing the urgency of creating new, sustainable futures, Talbot poses the fundamental question: Can we reimagine our relationship with nature in a way that acknowledges and embraces the interdependence of all life, fostering cooperation and reciprocity?

About Emma Talbot

Emma Talbot (b.1969, Stourbridge, UK) is a British artist living and working in London, UK and Reggio Emilia, Italy. She is known for personal, narrative-driven works encompassing painting, drawing, animation and textile art. Talbot studied at the Royal College of Art in London and the Birmingham Institute of Art & Design. She has gained international acclaim, receiving awards such as the Max Mara Art Prize for Women (2020–22). Talbot's work has been exhibited worldwide, including at the 59th Venice Biennale: The Milk of Dreams (2022); KINDL, Berlin; Kunsthall Stavanger, Norway; Tate St Ives, UK; Whitechapel Gallery, London; Collezione Maramotti, Reggio Emilia, Italy; Kunsthau Biel Centre d'art Bienne, Switzerland; Beiqiu Museum, Nanjing, China; KM21, The Hague, the Netherlands; and Turner Contemporary, Margate, UK. In Denmark, Talbot has shown her work in recent group exhibitions at the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art and ARoS Aarhus Kunstmuseum.

Press preview

CC invites you to a press preview on Friday January 31st 2025, from 11:00–12:00.

CC Director Marie Laurberg, Exhibition Curator Aukje Lepoutre Ravn, and artist Emma Talbot will welcome you and introduce the exhibition's artworks and themes.

For registration and interview enquiries, please contact mia@cphco.org.

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Opening Party

CC invites everyone to come and celebrate the opening of *Are You a Living Thing That Is Dying or a Dying Thing That Is Living?* on January 31st with an unforgettable party.

The event is free of charge.

Program:

17:00 DJ, food + bar and afterparty wristband pick-up in CC's foyer
18:00 Opening speech: Marie Laurberg, Director of CC
18:15 Exhibition opens in Hall 3
20:00 Afterparty in Hall 6
Line-up: Frederik Valentin, Molina, Zoumer & Debbie, Clubs and more
00:00 Goodnight!

For more information about the exhibition:

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