Does reality also have four corners?

Trine Ross

We cannot expect to find answers in the works of Sara Christensen.
Instead, we are met by a number of questions that in a strange way shift the recognizable a tiny bit, for it to become extraordinary. Take for instance an orange. Everyone is familiar with an orange. Many of us have heard the expression 'an orange in the turban', which originates from Oehlenschläger's play *Aladdin*, and which is used when something turns out surprisingly well. A stroke of luck. And it truly does turn out well, when Sara Christensen with her wizardry almost makes us believe that an orange is rotating in the wall!

It's this balance between the actual and the free imagination, between what we know and what we are willing to believe in, that makes it so good being in the company of Christensen's work. And soon, an inner logic comes into being, connections form between the pieces, and indeed: another orange appears in one of the larger paintings in the triptych bearing the precise title
'With reference to reality' (*Med reference til virkeligheden*).

And then which reality is an open question, not least because the returning figures in the paintings are abducted from a cartoon series. On the other hand, we might ask why this cartoon universe would be less real than many others? So what is actually reality? Is it the motifs in Christensen's paintings that create an illusory depth, or is it the canvas itself with it's distinct stitches, that seems to insist on it's own flatness that is the most real?

As our thoughts, straight lines are twisted and stretched in several of Christensen's works. Just look at how the stripes become something almost three-dimensional in works such as 'Let's keep in touch' (*Lad os holde kontakten*) and 'Over and out' (*Over and out*), where the sewn seams create op-art and seasickness. Also take a look at the trail of stripes circling the factory building in the piece 'Up in smoke' (*Op i røg*): suddenly, in the zigzag, they abandon the pattern, and, precisely as chimney smoke– turn into a living plant.

These surprises, this organic changeability and this welcoming excess, is what gives Sara Christensen's work a depth we are invited to explore. With a title like 'The train has departed, the plane has flown, the bus has driven and the ship has sailed' (*Toget er gået, flyet er fløjet, bussen er kørt og skibet har lagt fra ka*j), the adventure is not to be mistaken. But at the same time it asks the terrible question: *Did we make it? Or am I left alone behind on the platform?*

And what does it really mean, to explore? To be 'Explorer'? Most of us would think of safari helmets, shorts and a white man getting lost, but Christensen with pleasure asks if this is also a true perception. Her sculpture titled 'Explorer' (*Explorer*) is in this case something very different to that, with the interaction between long wiry legs and solidness, between body and abstraction, function and something extremely funny without being able to say what.

'Explorer' reminds me mostly of a mother with a child on route to the nursery a rainy morning. Who says that this type of mundane journey can't be experienced as an expedition trip, an investigation of the world in a completely new way? Daily life is really a place to go exploring in, especially with Sara Christensen as a guide and shepherd. This is additionally underlined in 'Camping sculpture I and II' (*Camping skulptur I og II*), which is encouraged by something once used as a tent – now transformed into several enormous bathing balls. Too heavy to launch, too large to bring along to the beach; but insisting in their own presence in the middle of the room. And they are moored, as if they might suddenly start to levitate, or roll away, together with all our dreams of summer days and hot air balloon trips. Maybe the sculptures actually can fly and disappear, simultaneously? Lead us away on an adventure? These are the questions that make the world and the works of Sara Christensen marvellous!

Translation: Julie Lillelien Porter