

# PETER MARTENSEN

## Boundaries

painting – drawing

20.09.2024 > 2.11.2024

### PRIVATE VIEW

Thursday 19 September, 5 pm > 8:30 pm

### READING

Saturday 5 October, 3 pm: the author **Brice Liaud** reads *Pose*, a poetic essay published in 2023 by *Espaces – Éditeur scientifique* and inspired by Peter Martensen's work

### STARTING SUNDAY

*la semaine de l'art* (art week) starts in the galleries

Sunday 13.10.2024, 2 pm > 6 pm – [comitedesgaleriesdart.com](http://comitedesgaleriesdart.com)

Galleries welcome you on Sunday for this autumn event

### NOCTURNE DU MARAIS

*la semaine de l'art* (MARAIS NIGHT OPENING)

Thursday 17.10.2024, 7 pm > 9 pm – [comitedesgaleriesdart.com](http://comitedesgaleriesdart.com)

Galleries in the Marais come together for an event-filled evening

### FAIR

22.11.2024 > 24.11.2024

LUXEMBOURG ART WEEK – Luxembourg – [www.luxembourgartweek.lu](http://www.luxembourgartweek.lu)

Didier Boussarie – Nicolai Howalt – Elise Peroi – Marlon Wobst

*When I was a student, discovering Bacon was a shock to me. It was the 70s; performance and concept art were prevailing. He allowed me to understand that it was still possible to paint the human condition, strikingly and sincerely. Humans are just like animals, with but a thin layer of civilisation. I'd like this layer to be thicker; I'm a romantic.*  
excerpt from *Peter Martensen, painter of the blues of the human condition*,  
interview with Valentine Meyer, 2021 – [open-ring.com](http://open-ring.com)

The title *Boundaries* refers to red lines, to those limits existing in themselves because of their impassable nature, or to the limits we set for one another for protection or control. Essential to human relations and life in a society, and partly specific to each culture, limitations may be in the form of an express rule or a law. Be it a justified restriction of the agency of citizens or the result of manipulation, these limits are of the most sensitive nature.

A keen observer of his time and of the depths of the human soul, Peter Martensen offers us a set of vivid scenes with *Boundaries*. There, human figures navigate through landscapes –on the edge of a pit, their feet in the water, on a small boat, near invisible, melted in a field–, or through nameless enclosed spaces and pens. Despite the prevalent stillness of these situations, there is great tension: Freeze frames or immobile time? Dream or nightmare? Despair, anxiety, absurdity, honest or nervous laughs: these situations trigger the most ambiguous emotions and reactions. Confusion prevails. A lone woman clad in a nurse gown at the bottom of a great wall orientates a torchlight upwards: *Signal!*

Peter Martensen's sources of inspiration are many: a news item, a detail on a photograph, a personal experience or a sudden thought. Some figures with particularly expressive poses or gestures sometimes come back in his works, symbolising different things depending on the context. The anonymous men in white shirts or gowns, who for a long time prevailed in his universe in order to neutralise and generalise the human

GALERIE

M A R I A  
L U N D

48 rue de Turenne  
75003 Paris

T. +33 (0)1 42 76 00 33  
M. +33 (0)6 61 15 99 91

[galerie@marialund.com](mailto:galerie@marialund.com)  
[marialund.com](http://marialund.com)

figure, are now accompanied by silhouettes in everyday clothes. Though some compositions are repeated in variations, repetition here is a form of research: it allows to set a device, to then move it, add to it, or remove it. Observe, restart –or challenge with a detail. The artist compares his work in his studio to a laboratory where the subject matter is human beings. What's private and intimate is kept at a distance in order to leave room for each and everyone's own projection.

Literally starting from darkness –each painting begins with a layer of a very dark colour–, Peter Martensen builds and gradually reveals through the use of bright tones, placed on top. Painting first and thinking second, the artists seek to see through the night of matter. With this principle of *chiaroscuro*, something settles in and becomes visible. A land of depths takes shape, with its strata of unrest, of pulsion, and of dreams. Like a scene in a play, the unfathomable faces us. Peter Martensen refers to his universe as *mental reality*. Granted, this reality is unique to each and every one, but the situations it offers allow us to gaze at ourselves, to talk about ourselves, and to continually question everything. Born from our time, the aesthetics of his works nods at the 50s and 60s, but its temporality is timeless.

**Deeply affected by the book *Family of Man* since he was a child, Peter Martensen wants to tell us about ourselves, in all our facets: tender, fragile, comical, powerful, or terrible. His keen awareness of the past and history coexist with his interest in so-called supernatural phenomena. His works are thus born from both facts and uncertainties, from these units defined by a framework whose actors and props have been cast by the author, so the sequel can play within us.**

## background

**Peter Martensen** (born in 1953 in Odense, Denmark), has regular exhibitions in institutions and galleries of his home country as well as in Europe, in Asia, and in the United States. *Boundaries* marks the artist's eleventh exhibition at Galerie Maria Lund since the start of their collaboration in 2000.

In 2010, Peter Martensen was one of the eight Nordic artists featured in the exhibition *Nuances de noir*, founding event of the *Passionism (Ordrupgaard and Vejle museums)* in Denmark). Before that, in 2006, a retrospective exhibition of Peter Martensen's work, *Solo*, had been organized by the **Sophienholm institution** and the **Vejle Kunstmuseum** (Denmark). In 2014, the **Brandts museum** in Odense (Denmark) presented ***From Grid to Romance***, a personal exhibition featuring paintings, drawings, and videos from 1990 to 2014. The **Musée d'art moderne et contemporain of Saint-Étienne Métropole – MAMC+** showed his work for the first time in 2016 in an exhibition of contemporary drawings, *Intrigantes Incertitudes* (Intriguing Uncertainties). In 2017, his personal exhibition *Ravage* was presented by the museum and the Maison du Denmark (Paris), allowing a French audience to fully appreciate Peter Martensen's universe in its entirety (painting, drawing, video, and sculpture).

In 2017, his art of portraiture was the theme of the exhibition *Portraits* at the **Frederiksborg Museum of National History** (Denmark). The following year, a selection of his drawings was shown as part of *Intriguing Uncertainties* at the **Parkview Museum** (Beijing), while the exhibition *Disturbing Narratives* at the **Parkview Museum** (Singapore) presented his painting.

Peter Martensen's work has joined many public collections: **MAMC+ of Saint-Étienne, FRAC Normandie Rouen, Statens Museum for Kunst** (Copenhagen), **Vejle Kunstmuseum, V&A** (London), **Kunsthalle Rostock, Centre Culturel de Hainaut**, and **Göteborg Kunstmuseum**. The artist has also been approached for public and private commissions (portraits, sculptures, and monumental paintings). He is currently finishing a commission of eight monumental paintings for the AP Pension headquarters in Copenhagen.

**From 17.08.2024 to 02.03.2025**, his work will be part of the exhibition ***Dansk Kunst – Dänische Positionen aus der Sammlung der Kunsthalle Rostock***, dedicated to the collection of Danish contemporary artists of the **Kunsthalle Rostock** (Germany).

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**M A R I A  
L U N D**

48 rue de Turenne  
75003 Paris

T. +33 (0)1 42 76 00 33  
M. +33 (0)6 61 15 99 91

[galerie@marialund.com](mailto:galerie@marialund.com)  
[marialund.com](http://marialund.com)