

Karolina Modig

Paula Tove Alderin's works bear traces of a world that trembles. They carry her own existential and physical experiences; they incorporate materials whose threads reach back into history and link forward to the future. In the absence of colour and definable form, one senses something dawning, a possible "something," which simultaneously seems to be taking shape and fading away before one's eyes.

The exhibition *SHED – Horizons of Rawness* transports the viewer to a place or a state where the familiar ceases and something else takes over. Through her multidisciplinary practice, Alderin explores the horizon of rawness, filtered through philosophy, politics, and beliefs, and allows the formless to take shape through the personal and cultural meanings of the body and the material. In the exhibition, which is the artist's first at the gallery, she weaves together existential experiences with contemporary global upheavals and treats rawness as an unstable interval – a state of both becoming and dissolution – where matter, form, and meaning both emerge and dissolve.

There is a fragility in Alderin's work, a beauty in the dual presence of creation and destruction, of the dawning and the fleeting. At the same time, the works possess a palpable intensity, where rawness, gesture, and materiality strike through their powerful presence. The tremors and instabilities of both the outside world and the body are evident in forms that appear as sinkholes, in titles such as *Inferno* and *Oblivion*, and in the black charcoal that resembles the dust left behind when large buildings collapse.

But black also holds light and all colours within it. The charcoal contains memories of time and life. The works, which can be seen as acts of violence, also embody softness and beauty in the next moment.

In her practice, Alderin merges visual art and performative acts, emphasising what occurs in the act of the work's creation. Material, body, and thought are filtered through philosophical ideologies, poetic layers, and political dimensions – the latter serving as a critique of the obliteration of a world increasingly defined by disembodiment and political haste. As mentioned, this also entails the rebirth of all things; in the title, the word “shed” serves as a reminder of the skin's capacity to regenerate: that raw nakedness, which is also shy, fragile, and delicate. The shifts in both the course of existence and linguistic concepts. Porous spaces for deconstruction, transformation, and rebirth.

Science historian and theorist Donna Haraway writes about the importance of reclaiming the embodied, of understanding that our experiences have a physical foundation. It is precisely from the perspective of bodily experiences that Alderin explores the beauty of the dawning and the uncertainty of the fleeting; those liminal states or transitional phases where the raw, unprocessed, and unformed can take shape.

In a shared basement of the artist's childhood home stood a meat saw, belonging to the family's neighbour. Placed in that safe, domestic setting, it provoked early reflections on the raw and carnivorous in relation to the spiritual and beautiful. The exhibition features a work made from the skin of dead animals – in its rolled-up form, one of them takes the shape of both a piece of dead meat and a primordial foetal form – in which life is about to emerge. The rawness of the flesh is undeniable, but as the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty points out in his book *Le visible et l'invisible* (*The Visible and the Invisible*), the very concept of flesh also concerns the duality of the body. It pertains to the distance within the self as well as to its immediate proximity.

In Alderin's work, flesh and spirit, creation and decay, pleasure and pain, loss and growth, and the formless and the physical, intertwine. It is in the very phases of transition between these extremes that they exist, in the gradient between the raw and the hopeful. The artist navigates the spaces between language, matter, and the body, using materials such as ash, coal, flesh, and dust to weave the stories and memories embedded in matter into her practice. Here, printing ink etched onto metal and shards of decay are reused to create new images and memories, emerging from a state of oblivion and disappearance. Alderin's works are transformative spaces and states that both unify and dissolve our dualistic ideas. In the interstice, the indefinable space Plato and later Derrida called “khôra,” everything can emerge, shift, and vanish, never resting, never fully taking form. A place of becoming without being, where presence and absence entwine and possibilities linger just beyond definition. A place of existence, like a womb where flesh takes the shape of a foetus and becomes new life. An unknown language.

Paula Tove Alderin's gaze is directed toward the dual nature of the present, toward decay and resurrection, toward what has been lost and what remains: raw, unstable, and fragile states of becoming and dissolution.