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MARTIN AAGAARD HANSEN
AUTUMN SKULLCAP
14 JANUARY - 12 FEBRUARY 2022

To Martin, painting and foraging urge him to slow down to nature – as he chisels, sands, scrapes to unearth a new discovery. Whether it's scouring for mushrooms in Hareskoven forest, or etching into chalk-primed boards, he's always on a painstaking hunt for more.

Amongst his sprawling underworlds, Martin often depicts solitary figures scurrying across the scenes, a nod to his own sense of searching with brush and etching needle in hand. His paintings spiral, patterns repeating in on themselves like endlessly flowing mazes. The title 'Autumn skullcap' is the name of a poisonous mushroom, also known as 'deadly galerina' or 'funeral bell', that grows on the inside of dead trees. Martin likens the effect of growth in decay to the layers he builds up when painting, the deft outlines of wanderers merging amongst finely scored abrasions, like mycelium roots of a sprouting mushroom. He jostles between working behind and on top of the marks – applying paint with strewn bits of cloth to muddy and stain the surfaces.

Martin finds peace in the forest, a much needed escape from the city bustle. Many of his characters are versions of himself digging through soil, searching. He imagines 'wearing the season on your skull like a cap', each painting reciprocating the shifting patterns of a fungi growing, a longing to be back there. In some, the marks have a globular, molecular look, while others are more refined and certain of themselves. Martin's background in printmaking – notably etching, monotype and wood cutting – is plain to see on the boards: the act of removing and piercing the veils he's already built up.

He feels his way around the boards, acting on instinct, reminiscent of his steady meanderings around woodland while out foraging, in an absorbed solace from the world beyond.

Written by Ted Targett

Martin Aagaard Hansen (b. 1988 in Odense, Denmark) lives and works in Copenhagen. Recent exhibitions include: Triple Burner, Union Pacific, London, 2021, The Tired Mask of Spring, Salon 75, Copenhagen, 2020, Velvet Ropes, Galleri Golsa, Oslo, 2019, Ein Plein Air, XYZ Kunstscenen, Copenhagen, 2018, Widnes, Kunsthal Ronnerbaeksholm, Copenhagen, 2017.

