



Asger Jorn: Untitled, 1956,
oil on canvas, 100×81 cm.,
Atkins 1004, provenience:
Reinhold d'Haese.
Photo: Jens Hammer, Webshot

Asger Jorn

16 Paintings - 16 Fantastic Tales

19 January - 4 March 2008

GALERIE BIRCH of Copenhagen presents a rare exhibition of works by Denmark's most recognized painter, Asger Jorn. This important solo exhibition, entitled *16 Paintings - 16 Fantastic Tales*, offers a unique opportunity to experience a great many paintings by Jorn assembled in one unique show. Not graphic works, these are strictly oils on canvas on loan from private international collections. Each work is displayed with an accompanying text, both anecdotal and informative. Anette Birch, proprietor of the **GALERIE BIRCH** - now in its second generation - ensures that this rare solo show proves to be "a very intimate exhibition".

Intimate and personal

The paintings stem primarily from the period leading up to and including Jorn's breakthrough in the 1950's - all are of the highest quality with international character and appeal. However, having said that, there are some fine examples falling outside these years as well, like the sensual portrait of *Elna Fønnesbech Sandberg* from 1945, whose perfected abstract style represents the earliest work on display. With its unmistakable reference to both Edvard Munch's *Madonna* (Nasjonalgalleriet, Oslo) and Jorn's own work, a highly individual paraphrase of Leonardo's *Mona Lisa* painted the year before, the portrait remains a suitable homage to an affectionate and free-willed patron - Jorn's original supporter and collector. One of the latest works displayed, *Easter at Laesoe*, is by the same token one of the most personal; a gift from the artist to 11 year old Anette Birch in 1969, this intimate yet vital depiction must certainly invoke colourful childhood memories for its beholder.

Breakthrough Years

An untitled fiery canvas from 1956 (pictured here) represents new influences. Jorn is by the latter half of the 1950's splitting his time between Albisola in Italy - in company of an international group of artists including Appel, Baj, Corneille and Matta - and a new apartment in Paris. With its raw organic expression, symmetry and intrinsic ruddiness, this dynamic canvas bears witness to a newfound stylistic synthesis, a sensibility as Latin as it is Nordic. Only a few short years after the execution of this work, Jorn is winning the respect and admiration of critics and collectors with successful solo exhibitions in France, Belgium, Italy, England, Holland, Germany, and the whole of Scandinavia (and ultimately USA) to follow.

Lyrical and Literary

One of the exhibition's most enticing paintings is also one of its most literary. Not only are style and subject made to sway between abstract and recognizable elements, but also the actual titles themselves. That Jorn's *The Slithy Toves* is not dubbed, but literally conceived in English, is symptomatic: Jorn resided in England during its execution in 1966. An uncanny Northern atmosphere readily invokes images of ancient Nordic mythology; in reality, however, the subject matter relates directly to English Lewis Carroll's lyrical and fantastical universe in *Jabberwocky* - a so-called nonsense poem by the author of *Alice in Wonderland* and the equally bizarre *Behind the Looking Glass*, both from 1872.

Signs accompanying each painting offer an appreciated foothold that not only sheds light on individual canvases, but on a biographical context in general. A quotation dating from 1969 by Rolf E. Stenersen - the world-renowned Munch collector who donated his collection to Oslo in 1936 - produces a unique portrait of the great Dane:

“ The name of the greatest painter – who was born in Denmark – is Asger Jorn. They say a lot of good things about him here in Oslo. He should resemble Jesus Christ and originally have been a schoolteacher. The majority of his time is said to be used on writing books whilst smoking long cigars.

Every Sunday he swaps pen for paintbrush and gives himself to paint.

Jorn is such a great painter that no Dane has ever seen anything like it and is unwilling as such to give very much for his work.

The human mind is composed of many types of string. Many of which we know nothing about. Suddenly we are met by a work of art that sets some of these strings in motion. Jorn can make just that kind of art. He makes magic. Makes some of us dance as well as kneel. Why, he can even get me to fold my hands and thank heaven above. For I am still alive and able to ‘see’.”

Galerie Birch - Jorn's Gallery in Denmark

It is not surprising that the most important gallery exhibition of Jorn's work in many years should take place at GALERIE BIRCH in Copenhagen. Asger Jorn and Anette Birch's father and founder of the gallery, Børge Birch, enjoyed a close-knit relationship for nearly 40 years. GALERIE BIRCH has over the years maintained a profound understanding of Asger Jorn and his work, while nourishing a close relationship with that entire group of artists associated with CoBrA before, during and after its establishment. As Denmark's oldest gallery for modern art, GALERIE BIRCH remains a leader in personal knowledge and professional understanding of this uniquely prominent 20th century artist and the highly influential movement he established.

For further information regarding Asger Jorn's life and work please check out the links below:

Biography:

<http://www.galeriebirch.com/index.php?id=31&L=3>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asger_Jorn

<http://www.kulturarv.dk/kid/VisKunstner.do?kunstnerId=974>

<http://www.leksikon.org/art.php?n=3292>

<http://kunstonline.dk/diverse/biografier/?id=5314>

Public Collections:

http://www.artcyclopedia.com/artists/jorn_asger.html

http://www.guggenheimcollection.org/site/artist_bio_69.html

http://www.arken.dk/content/dk/arkens_samling/maleri_og_skulptur/asger_jorn

<http://www.silkeborgkunstmuseum.dk/ukindex.html>

<http://nordjyllandskunstmuseum.net.dynamicweb.dk/Default.aspx?ID=161>

Contact Galerie Birch for high-resolution images.

Galerie Birch

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