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Voyage of Discovery

Films, music, readings, interactive presentations and much more.

You can explore all the works in Denmark's Cultural Canon here on this website. We hope you have an exciting odyssey, which will make you want to experience more culture and art.

Welcome to the Cultural Canon!

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HOVER CHURCH

FRUGAL BEAUTY

By Jeppe Villadsen, journalist

We find them in their hundreds, spread across the Danish landscape. Everywhere, the churches tell stories of the period and places in which they were built. The church is an integral part of the Danish cultural landscape. And an irreplaceable part of Danish architectural culture. A landmark of the Denmark we know.

Sandblast charm

A sublime representative of the classical Danish village church is Hover Church - a small windswept church on the west coast of Jutland. It is one of the first stone churches in the country - and in fact one of the oldest preserved stone buildings in Denmark. With Hover Church, a direct line is drawn back to the very first wooden churches in Denmark. The church is basically the wooden church translated into stone.

Bellunder pent roof

Hover Church is Danish church architecture in its simplest form. The walls are granite. There are only four small, highly placed windows with ordinary glass - not glass mosaics as they are known from other churches.

Nor is there a belfry, so the church does not project above the landscape as most village churches do. One bell hanging underneath a pent roof on the east gable is the modest alternative to the traditional bell tower.

Intact nave

On the whole, the church has been left untouched for 800 years. Except for a restructured roof and a narthex from the 16th century, the church is intact.

Hover Church stands solidly in the tough Western Jutland landscape, its hard-wearing stones spiting the windy climate. At the same time, the simple construction of the building is a reflection of the historic frugality that has characterised nature and people in these parts.

LINKS

Kulturkanon i undervisningen:

www.kulturkanon.emu.dk/default.asp?ID=20048

Hover Sogn:

www.hover-grejsdal-kirke.dk/index.php/da/

Dansk Arkitektur Center:

www.dac.dk/visKanonVaerk.asp?artikelID=2612

FACTS

Work:

Hover Church, 12th century

Artist:

unknown architect

Work exhibited:

Hover Kirke, Ringkøbing

Hovervej 97, Hover

6971 Spjald

GLORUP MANOR

LET ROMANCE BLOSSOM

By Jeppe Villadsen, journalist

There is nowhere in Europe where there are as many manor houses and castles as in Eastern Funen.

In the middle of this fairytale landscape of landed estates, avenues and parks we find Glorup Manor. It was built in the 1590s as a four-winged renaissance manor, but was rebuilt in 1765. The rebuilding is actually the most notable feature of Glorup Manor.

Between green walls

The knowledgeable French landscape architect Nicolas Henri Jardin prepared a plan indicating how to transform the original moated renaissance estate, to a small elegant baroque manor with low, white-washed wings. Of the original building, only the cellars are preserved.

At the same time, one of the country's earliest romantic gardens was laid out, a so-called "Anglo-Chinese" garden. It reaches between the green walls of two mighty lime-tree avenues pointing out into the landscape from the manor. In the garden, oaks, fruit trees and exotic plants are spread in neat and regular patterns in addition to pavilions, ornamental vases and statues. Everything is connected by curving footpaths. A pond with a fountain on a small island in the middle rounds off the structure.

Andersen's favourite manor

Hans Christian Andersen often visited Glorup and even had his own room there. Over the years he spent a total of more than a year as a guest at the manor.

Today the garden and manor house are basically unchanged since the rebuilding in the mid-18th century and they are evidence of the exquisite and fine architecture and garden design of that period. As a structure, Glorup Manor is a fine example of architecture that is based on ideas from outside Denmark, but transformed into a Danish context.

LINKS

Glorup Herregårds hjemmeside:
www.glorupgods.dk/

Visit Nyborg om Glorup Herregård:
www.visitnyborg.dk/danmark/da-dk/menu/turist/oplevelser/attraktioner/produkside/gdk023892/glorup-herregaard.htm?CallerUrl=1#

Dansk Arkitektur Center om Glorup Herregård:
www.dac.dk/visKanonVaerk.asp?artikelID=2611

FACTS

Work:
Glorup Manor

Artist:
Nicolas Henri Jardin (1720-1799)

Work Exhibited:
Glorup Herregård, Svindinge
Glorupvej 34
5853 Ørbæk
Denmark

FREDERIKSTADEN

CLIMAX

By Jeppe Villadsen, journalist

Founded in 1747, Frederiksstaden is a district of Copenhagen. As many magnificent building projects from that period, the purpose was to glorify the absolute monarchy.

King Frederik V took the initiative for the building of an entirely new district complete with palaces for the nobility, bourgeois houses, a church and hospital - and quite appropriately, the fine new district was named after him.

Royal celebration

The backdrop to this grand project was a coincidence of fortunate circumstances: Denmark was in the throes of an economic boom, and important businesspeople wanted a new development close to the port with residential buildings, administration and storehouses. And last but not least: the king wanted to celebrate the 300th anniversary of the royal house of Oldenburg with a project that would attract attention.

Octagonal centre

The entire system of streets in Frederiksstaden is rectangular. The octagonal Amalienborg Palace Square constitutes the monumental centre. This is where the two main axes of the district - Amaliegade and Frederiksgade - cross.

Edging the octagonal square, which we know today as Amalienborg Palace Square, four nobleman's palaces were built, identical on the outside, but different inside.

Controlling the facades

The king's court architect, Nicolai Eigtved, was the architect for the entire project. He demanded highly rigid designs: all building heights, windows and cornices were to be aligned, and Eigtved himself was either to design or approve all building projects in order to ensure homogeneity.

Frederiksstaden is seen as a sublime climax in European city planning and architecture. Without comparison, it is the finest work of Danish rococo architecture and measures up to projects from the same period in cities such as Paris, Vienna and Berlin.

Links

kobenhavnshistorie.dk om Frederiksstaden:
www.kobenhavnshistorie.dk/bog/kko/f/kko_f-15.html

FACTS

Work:
Frederiksstaden, Copenhagen, 1749-

Artist:
Nicolai Eigtved (1701-1754)

Work Exhibited:
Frederiksstaden, in Copenhagen,
Denmark

COPENHAGEN'S ROCOCO

THE CHURCH OF OUR LADY

THE CHURCH OF OUR LADY (VOR FRUE KIRKE)

By Jeppe Villadsen, journalist

The history of the Church of Our Lady is grim. Over the centuries, it was burnt down and destroyed six times.

The last time was in 1807, when the English fleet bombarded Copenhagen aiming at the spire of the church, which rose above everything else and was the pride of the city. The spire burst into flames and lit up the centre of Copenhagen like a giant torch. The architect C.F. Hansen was given the task of designing a new main church for Copenhagen to be built on the ruins of its predecessor.

No time for luxuries

It was a dark period marred by the defeat to England, the national bankruptcy and Denmark's surrender of Norway to the Swedish king. It was not the time for luxuries. C.F. Hansen's quiet style and pure lines matched the mood. He created a temple-like building which did not resemble other churches at the time. From the outside, the church was built in the neoclassicist style, inspired by ancient Greece. This is obvious from the large Greek Doric colonnade that greets you from the street.

The compact tower was also remarkably different from the ostentatious spires seen in the rest of the city. In fact, C.F. Hansen would rather have avoided spires and towers altogether - the ancient temples did not have them. But King Frederik VI believed a tower could not be avoided. The tower was meant to inspire devoutness in the citizens!

In order to underline the classical look, Bertel Thorvaldsen, the great Danish sculptor of the period (see the Canon of the Arts) who lived in Rome, was asked to decorate the church with sculptures.

Forerunner of modernism

C.F. Hansen succeeded in creating a church room that radiates peace and harmony with its pure lines. With the subdued use of decoration and detail, the Church of Our Lady represents the beginnings of modern architecture in Denmark. Unlike the pompous and gold-adorned churches of earlier times, the simple and informal expression in the Church of Our Lady points towards our era.

LINKS

Kulturkanon i undervisningen:

www.kulturkanon.emu.dk/default.asp?ID=20048

Det sker i kirken:

www.aok.dk/byliv/vor-frue-kirke-koebenhavns-domkirke

Vor Frue Kirkes hjemmeside:

www.koebenhavnsdomkirke.dk/

FACTS

Work:

The Church of Our Lady, Copenhagen
1811-29

Artist:

Christian Frederik Hansen (1756-
1845)

Work Exhibited:

Vor Frue Kirke - Københavns Domkirke
Nørregade 8
1168 Copenhagen K
Denmark

JAEGERSBORG DEER PARK

THE GREEN PARADISE OF THE MIDDLE CLASSES

By Jeppe Villadsen, journalist

Just ten kilometres north of the centre of Copenhagen, Jaegersborg Deer Park extends like a ten square kilometre natural paradise.

The hills, the plains, the Hermitage Hunting Lodge and more than 2,000 deer give the Deer Park a grandiose character that is not found anywhere else in Denmark.

For more than a century, the easy access combined with the great natural experiences has made the Deer Park Denmark's most visited and loved wood. There is a direct relationship between the 19th century - when the annual picnic to the Deer Park was the most important event of the year for many Copenhagen families - to our time when seven million people visit the park every year.

The park of the middle classes

The Deer Park, as it looks today, is the result of the efforts of Rudolph Rothe, the first Royal Garden Inspector, to transform the area from forestry and hunting grounds to a park for modern citizens.

In 1843 it was decided that the Deer Park should no longer be used for forestry, but be treated as a "recreational forest". The idea was now primarily to preserve and strengthen the picturesque beauty of the area. The trees were left to become ancient, fall down and go through a natural rotting process.

The epitome of idyll

Since then, with its oaks, deer and small lakes, the Deer Park has represented a picture of Denmark which is seen by many as the essence of what is genuinely Danish, and the park has been portrayed by numerous painters and poets over the years.

In addition, the woods surrounding the Deer Park have given rise to the development of some of the country's most attractive residential areas - with regard to both architectural and landscape qualities. In particular, Arne Jacobsen's buildings from the 1930s and 1940s have helped to create a special area reflecting a Denmark that was heading for a new, light, modern and more liberal era.

LINKS

Gåture i dyrehaven:

www.naturstyrelsen.dk/Udgivelser/Vandretursfoldere/atilaa/Jaegersborg.htm

FACTS

Work:

Jaegersborg Deer Park, Copenhagen
1846

Artist:

Rudolph Rothe (1802-1877)

Work Exhibited:

Dyrehaven, Jægersborg, Copenhagen
Dyrehaven 1
2930 Klampenborg
Denmark

HOUSING ESTATE OF THE COPENHAGEN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

LIGHT, AIR AND CLEANLINESS

By Jeppe Villadsen, journalist

In order to fully understand the pioneering nature of the housing estate of the Copenhagen Medical Association housing estate - or “Brumleby” as it is popularly called - you have to go back to the period when it was built.

For centuries, the density of Copenhagen within the walls had grown. People lived very close together in dark, unhealthy backyards and stinking alleys. In the summer of 1853, the city was ravaged by a violent cholera epidemic which cost the lives of 5,000 Copenhageners in just a few months. It was obvious that new, airy urban planning was needed.

Healthy row houses

Already before the epidemic had subsided, a group of doctors had taken the initiative to build a new housing estate on the then isolated common of Oestre Faelled. They wanted to create healthy, inexpensive housing for the working class. In the spring of 1854 the first blocks were ready to be inhabited: yellow and white row houses in two storeys with small front gardens and green areas. The inspiration was to be found in the houses of Italian rural workers.

Kindergarten and library

Brumleby is one of the earliest examples of a housing development that opens the urban space and sends light and air into the houses. Furthermore, in the following years the houses were equipped with a range of common facilities: kindergarten, public bath, assembly hall, library and the first co-operative shop of Copenhagen.

Model for posterity

In this way, Brumleby marks a shift in the way of perceiving housing in Denmark. Brumleby represents architecture based on the well-being of human beings. And it was conducive to the ideas of social sustainability which are the core of the Danish welfare state and which have developed into a model for the world.

Links

Kulturkanon i undervisningen:

www.kulturkanon.emu.dk/default.asp?ID=20048

Østerbro lokalhistoriske forening:

www.2100lokalhistorisk.dk/ark_bog.htm

Historien om Brumleby:

www.brumleby.dk/frontpage.php?oldItem=231&pageId=231

FACTS

Work:

Housing estate of the Copenhagen Medical Association, Copenhagen 1854-56

Artists:

Michael G. Bindsbøll (1800-1856),
Vilhelm Klein (1835-1913)

Work Exhibitioned:

Lægeforeningens Boliger, Brumleby
2100 Copenhagen Ø
Denmark

MARIEBJERG CEMETERY

THE MODERN GRAVEYARD

By Jeppe Villadsen, journalist

An aerial view of Mariebjerg Cemetery reveals a tight, schematic pattern over a vast area: trees in straight lines, sharply pruned hedges and square spaces - a neat and well-organised system framed by woods.

A network of big avenues cut through the cemetery and long, metre-high hedges subdivide the area.

Concentrated Denmark

Trees, plants and bushes are used to create a wide range of separate “grave spaces”, each with their unique expression - from the well-nursed garden to the forest-like area. Each space contains an interpretation of a characteristic part of the Danish landscape. There are ditches, flowering meadows, wood clearances, fields, overgrown slopes etc.

Mariebjerg Cemetery is a demonstration of how a continuous whole can be created despite people’s different wishes for their burial place. The solution is the varying types of defined spaces for different types of graves. At the same time, the spaces create intimacy around the burial sites.

Green modernism

With its ambition to create order and coherence between the cemetery and the individual burial sites, Mariebjerg Cemetery is part of the modern breakthrough in Denmark. The cemetery has been copied in many other places in the country. It has achieved great international recognition and is considered a major work in European garden architecture.

Democratic burial

At its inauguration in 1936, Mariebjerg represented a radical confrontation with the traditional way of thinking and designing a cemetery. Particularly since the individual burial place became less important at Mariebjerg Cemetery, because the grave sites must adapt to a common plan.

For this reason it has been called a ‘democratic cemetery’. There are no ostentatious or self-orchestrated burial monuments here - in death we are all equal.

Links

Gentofte Kommune om kirkegården:

www.gentofte.dk/borger/by-og-miljø/kirkegårde/mariebjerg-kirkegård

FACTS

Work:

Mariebjerg Cemetery, Gentofte 1925-35

Artist:

Gudmund Nyeland Brandt (1878-1945)

Work Exhibited:

Mariebjerg Kirkegård
Mariebjergvej 1
2820 Gentofte
Denmark

THE UNIVERSITY OF AARHUS

UNIVERSITY AT EYE LEVEL

By Jeppe Villadsen, journalist

In 1931, a brand new university was to be built in Aarhus. But the time of monumental and awe-inspiring buildings for institutions of higher education had come to an end.

A new, modern architectural style was advancing, promoting light and clean lines. It was essential that all details were carefully thought through, in order that the buildings would function well for the people who were to use them. The result was the university we see today. It has been extended continually ever since the first buildings were finished in 1933.

Simplicity is a virtue

The University of Aarhus is built around a gorge and a beautiful, hilly landscape reaching down towards the sea. The buildings are scattered over a large park-like area which gives the compound the campus-like quality we know from foreign, particularly American, universities.

The style of the first buildings has been maintained in all the buildings which have been added over the years: a simple and strict expression; straight lines; all in yellow brick and roof tiles giving the buildings a homogenous character.

The birth of functionalism

The project was part of the movement that has later been dubbed “functionalism”, in which form is secondary to function, and where unnecessary decoration and ornamentation has been cut away. With its beautiful and simple mode of expression and respect for the people who were to use it, the University of Aarhus founded a school for Danish architecture that reigned until the mid-1950s.

LINKS

Fotos på arkitektfirmaet C.F. Møllers hjemmeside:
www.cfmoller.com/p/The-University-of-Aarhus-i232.html

FACTS

Work:
The University of Aarhus, Aarhus
1931-

Artists:
Kay Fisker, C.F. Møller, P. Stegmann,
C.Th. Sørensen

Work Exhibited:
Aarhus Universitetet
Nordre Ringgade 1
8000 Århus C
Denmark

AARHUS TOWN HALL

THE FRIENDLY TOWN HALL

By Jeppe Villadsen, journalist

When the City Council of Aarhus arranged a competition for a new town hall, it was the first time since the building of the Copenhagen Town Hall around the turn of the century, that a large Danish city was to have a new town hall. And it was a new era.

With the introduction of new electoral legislation, the king was barred from appointing mayors, and women were allowed to vote and run for seats. In general, there was a feeling that the barriers between citizens and politicians had to be broken down. Modern local politicians were no longer to exercise their powers from fortress-like colossi, but administer their powers in open and inviting buildings.

Lots of light and soft lines

The new tendencies left their vital marks on the town hall in Aarhus. The building appears light, friendly and inviting - the "openness" is specifically expressed in the many windows and glass sections which literally throw light and air into the public administration.

It is significant that the most pompous element is the building's impressive, high-ceilinged hall with room for 800 people. The hall was intended as a meeting place for the people and their elected politicians.

The building is also characterised by its soft lines. All details are rounded: from balconies, columns and staircases and all the way down to the light fixtures. Wood and brass dominate the interior and give the rooms a warm, golden colour. The result is an especially pleasant and "soft" atmosphere.

Last town hall tower

The building was originally designed without its characteristic tower. Towers were the power symbols of church, king and nobility and did not belong on a building that was to serve democracy.

The citizens of Aarhus protested, however. They wanted a building that looked like a town hall. After heated debate, the City Council demanded a tower, and that the building should be covered with marble in order to add a more monumental character. But it was the last town hall tower that was erected in Denmark.

LINKS

Århus Kommunes hjemmeside om rådhuset:
[/www.aarhus.dk/da/omkommunen/organisation/teknik-og-miljoe/
Ejendomsforvaltningen/Rundvisning-og-besoeg-i-taarnet.aspx](http://www.aarhus.dk/da/omkommunen/organisation/teknik-og-miljoe/Ejendomsforvaltningen/Rundvisning-og-besoeg-i-taarnet.aspx)

Dansk Arkitektur Center om Aarhus Rådhus:
www.dac.dk/visKanonVaerk.asp?artikelID=2590

FACTS

Work:
Aarhus Town Hall, 1937-42

Artists:
Arne Jacobsen (1902-1971) og Erik Møller (1909 - 2002)

Work Exhibited:
Aarhus Rådhus
Rådhuspladsen 2
8000 Aarhus C
Denmark

THE FINGER PLAN

GREENERY BETWEEN THE FINGERS

By Jeppe Villadsen, journalist

In 1947 when the town planners were to name their great, new plan for the urban development of Copenhagen, it wasn't hard: the Finger Plan.

Just look at the pictures! The group of young architects and town planners who were to design a development plan for Greater Copenhagen had discovered that the contour of the plan rather exactly matched the shape of a hand.

At a time when many big cities in Europe grew aimlessly in all directions, eating into the surrounding environment, the Danish town planners conceived their brilliant idea: Copenhagen was to grow outwards in five fingers towards the surrounding towns. In return, there was to be no urban development in the green areas between the fingers.

Nature at the front door

The Finger Plan was also an answer to the accelerating car traffic in the years following World War II. That is why the skeleton in the fingers were commuter train lines ending in Koege Bugt, Taastrup, Ballerup, Farum and Holte.

The wedges in between the fingers were to be green areas so that the populations of the new suburbs would have the shortest possible distance to open landscape. The green areas would not be built on, but would remain fields, woods and recreational areas. The palm of the hand - the old part of Copenhagen - was still to be developed as the natural centre of the city.

Growing web

Ever since, this simple plan has been the governing ideal for the development of Copenhagen. And in contrast to many other grandiose town plans, the Finger Plan has actually been implemented. Even though some of the fingers are webbed, and some of them have nearly grown together!

Many people believe that it is thanks to the Finger Plan that Copenhagen has avoided some of the traffic congestion that is known from other big cities. And then it is the only piece of Danish town planning that is widely known outside the country.

LINKS

Dansk Arkitektur Center om Fingerplanen:

www.dac.dk/da/service-sider/nyheder/2012/september/ny-publikation-fra-dac-om-forstaedernes-boligarkitektur/

FACTS

Work:

The Finger Plan, 1947

Artist:

Peter Bredsdorff (1913-1981)

Work Exhibited:

Fingerplanen

Plan for Copenhagen

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE

WORLD FAMOUS SHELLS

By Jeppe Villadsen, journalist

Almost only the Pyramids in Egypt can boast a more famous silhouette than the characteristic white shells that constitute the roof of Joern Utzon's Opera House in Sydney.

The Opera House is considered Utzon's chief work, and without comparison it is the world's most famous architectural work designed by a Danish architect.

Unforgettable images

The images pile up when you are looking at the Sydney Opera: a ship with sails suspended in the wind, a handful of white conches, or flapping bird's wings. Common to all the motifs is the architect's inspiration from nature.

At the same time grand and poetic, the Opera House is placed on a small point in Sydney Bay. At this spectacular location, the building resembles a fleet with its sails set, ready to depart or dock - in much the same way as Australian immigrants have long arrived by ship to the huge island.

A million white tiles

The building itself appears as a slightly floating formation of gigantic white shells in different sizes which rises above the terrace-shaped foundation and lifts its head towards the sky and the sea. With its more than one million white-glazed tiles, the roof shines and sparkles in the sun.

Utzon's Opera House is an architectural pearl - and a national pride both in Australia and Denmark. With its simple and lively shape and well-considered detail, it is regarded the most significant contribution to world architecture designed by a Danish architect.

Links

Operahusets officielle hjemmeside:
www.sydneyoperahouse.com/

Dansk Arkitektur Center om Sydney Opera House:
www.dac.dk/da/service-sider/kalender/bogreception---jorn-utzons-sydney-opera-house/

Utzoncenter:
www.utzoncenter.dk/en/exhibitions/previous_exhibition/utzons_masterpeace_sydney_operahouse.htm

Utzon Opera House:
www.utzonoperahouse.com/

FACTS

Work:
Sydney Opera House, 1957

Artist:
Jørn Utzon (f. 1918)

The East Bridge over The Great Belt

Sydney Opera House
Benelong Point
Sydney, Australien

THE EAST BRIDGE OVER THE GREAT BELT

THE EAST BRIDGE

By Jeppe Villadsen, journalist

Not surprisingly it has been called Denmark's answer to the Pyramids. The East Bridge, the elevated bridge across the eastern part of the Great Belt, the so-called, is an impressive piece of architecture in every sense of the word. With its 6,790 metres (nearly 7 kilometre!) it is the second longest suspension bridge in the world. The two pylons rise 254 metres above the surface of the sea, and this makes them the highest man-made points in Denmark.

The entire construction is held by an anchor block with a weight of 325,000 tonnes. Even the price of DKK 21.6 billion in 1988 prices for the total bridge and tunnel link can seem staggering. The bridge is Denmark's largest building project so far.

A water sculpture

And there is more than the size to impress. The bridge proves that large sizes can easily go hand in hand with grace and elegance.

The suspension bridge rises like an enormous sculpture between the flat eastern part of Funen and equally flat Zealand. The slim silhouette hovers elegantly above the water surface. The proportions between pylons, the slight curve of the roadway and the enormous cables are in perfect balance when seen from a distance as well as from the bridge itself. The trip across the bridge through the pylons is a dizzying, almost cathedral-like experience - sky, sea, light and bridge form a synthesis.

Denmark became smaller

It took seven years to complete the enormous suspension bridge. New road signs, showing directions to Odense, emerged along the Zealand motorways. And conversely - on Funen, the distance to Copenhagen was suddenly abbreviated to little more than an hour by car or train. Today, the bridge is a symbol of the linking of the Danish island kingdom. Denmark shrank.

LINKS

Storebæltsbroens officielle hjemmeside:
www.storebaelt.dk/

Kulturkanon i undervisningen:
www.kulturkanon.emu.dk/default.asp?ID=20048

Dansk Arkitektur Center om østbroen:
www.dac.dk/da/service-sider/nyheder/2011/marts/dissingweitlings-brodirektoer-modtager-eckersberg-medailen/

FACTS

Work:
The East Bridge over The Great Belt,
1991-98

Artists:
DISSING + WEITLING arkitektfirma a/s

The East Bridge over The Great Belt
Østbroen (Storebæltsbroen)
Storebælt
Denmark

Imagery

- 018** The Sun Chariot
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THE SUN CHARIOT

SUN GOD ON WHEELS

By Trine Møller Madsen, writer on art and cultural affairs and an author

Yellow, glowing and many millions of kilometres away. We yearn for it during winter and worship it without constraint during the summer. Chase it over great distances and try to imitate it with monstrous machines. The sun has power over humans, and it has always been like that.

In ancient times, the sun was considered God himself. Actually not so strange. People paid tribute to the sun at special ceremonies and adored it, carrying sacrifices. Such a sacrifice is the Sun Chariot from about 1350 BC. It is ingeniously shaped in bronze with the finest ornaments chiselled into the metal. One side of the sun disc is coated with pure gold. The other is dark - that was how the sun was at night.

The debut of Danish art

The Trundholm Sun Chariot is the oldest known Danish artwork. It dates back to the Older Bronze Age - from a time when people imagined that the earth was flat, and that the sun was pulled across the sky by its helpers: the fish, the snake, the horse and the ships. In fact never on wheels, but by rope. The sun chariot has six wheels because they made it possible to pull it across the sacrificial area - as a particularly dramatic effect under the divine ceremony.

Popular sun

The symbolism and attraction of the sun is endlessly strong. In the history of art going back several millennia, countless works feature the sun as the main figure. Even in the most recent art. Just remember the Danish-Icelandic artist Olafur Eliasson who attracted more than two million visitors to Tate Modern in London with his gigantic solar installation The Weather Report in 2004. It was more than 3000 years after the Sun Chariot rolled out for its last journey in the bog.

LINKS

Kulturkanon i undervisningen:

www.kulturkanon.emu.dk/default.asp?ID=20037

Hjemmesiden "Guder og Grave":

www.guderoggrave.dk/

Nationalmuseet om Solvognen:

natmus.dk/historisk-viden/danmark/oldtid-indtil-aar-1050/bronzealderen-1700-fkr-500-fkr/solvognen/

FACTS

The Sun Chariot.

Unknown artist approx. 1400 B.C.

Work is exhibited at the National Museum

Frederiksholms Kanal 12
1220 Copenhagen K

A TRIANGULAR MIRACLE

A TRIANGULAR MIRACLE

By Trine Møller Madsen, writer on art and cultural affairs and an author

How do you illustrate an inexplicable, divine event? And how do you make it so vivid that the scene captures an audience seated several metres below on a cold pew?

In the first half of the 15th century, “Unionsmesteren” (“The Union Master”) knew the recipe. With his painter’s gear, he toured the churches of the Kalmar Union countries (Denmark and Sweden) - thus his nickname. He also passed by Undløse Church in Sealand where his picture Resurrection still shines clearly in the arch right above the altar.

Are you asleep?

The Resurrection is a key scene in The New Testament. Death is no longer a major player and Jesus Christ rises from the grave. Unionsmesteren used the triangular bay in the vault to underline the hierarchical setup: the victorious Christ at the top and the dull, unenlightened soldiers underneath. And he uses the image field all the way to the frame. Observe how Christ rests his foot on the arch in the bottom of the vault. It’s as if he is on his way to enter the church. The story comes alive and comes close to us. Note also the individual features and lifelike characters of the soldiers. They help to capture our attention: You aren’t asleep down there on the pew, are you?

But it is not an everyday event that takes place above the altar. Unionsmesteren indicates this by letting a red ornament meander down from the top wind around Christ - as fiery tongues or a burning glory. A striking and artful description of the Holy Spirit carefully lifting Christ out of the dark, humid grave and into eternity.

The Holy Bible as a cartoon

In the Nordic area, the first frescos appear in the 12th century. The picture stories were a help for the many illiterate and unlettered churchgoers. All those who did not understand the Latin that was preached. The paintings acted as a kind of cartoon, making the biblical teachings more acceptable. In the myriad of frescos in Danish churches, sometimes there are these special pearls painted with a fantastic sense of imagery and an unusually lively line. This is how Unionsmesteren painted.

LINKS

www.kalkmalerier.dk/

FACTS

Work:

Resurrection, approx. 1440

Artist:

The Union Master performed many frescos in the period 1410-1440

Work exhibited:

Undløse Church
Hovedgaden 2, Undløse
4340 Tølløse

BORDESHOLM ALTAR

DIVINE CRAFTSMANSHIP

By Trine Møller Madsen, writer on art and cultural affairs and an author

Although it is a far cry from the colourful Disney cartoons of our time, you might call the Bordesholm Altar a cartoon.

The gigantic wooden relief describes the Passion, scene by scene and with a multitude of figures. As many as 400 figures have been brought forward from under the oak bark by Hans Brüggemann and his tools. It took him seven years to complete the altar.

In its entirety, the altar seems almost chaotic. But a zoom into one of the scenes - such as "Christ breaks down the gates of death" - reveals Brüggemann's impressive wood-carving skills. Notice the shameful couple, Adam and Eve, who cover their nakedness. Or a fine detail such as the expressive glance exchanged between Christ and Abraham whom he frees from the land of the dead. Or how about the devilish bird that points its trident at those who are damned? Ready to be impaled if they are not true to their faith!

The floating city

Weighing several tons, the altar gets lighter towards the top where it is completed by fine ornaments. Overall, it is reminiscent of a piece of magical architecture reaching for the sky. The altar becomes a symbol of The Heavenly City ruled by Christ on his throne who hovers above it all. He is "The Last Judge" who will sit in judgment of the living and the dead. Separate the sheep from the rams. Who wouldn't prefer to hover up there in eternity instead of being roasted in the flames of hell, deep down beneath the earth?

New ideals

In Brüggemann's time, art was developing rapidly. Try to compare the description of space and figure with Resurrection by Unionsmesteren (which has also been selected for the Canon of the Arts) painted just 80 years earlier. Now the picture space begins to resemble something real!

There is no doubt that Brüggemann knew the Passion wood-carving by the German master Albrecht Dürer. Dürer had learnt several tricks from the clever Italian renaissance artists who developed the central perspective, and life-like figure drawing. Brüggemann imitated him in a most accomplished way.

LINKS

Om alteret på Grænseforeningens hjemmeside:
www.graenseforeningen.dk/leksikon/b/all/3961

FACTS

Work:
Bordesholm Altar, 1521

Artist:
Hans Brüggemann (ca. 1485-1523)

Work exhibited:
Dom St. Petri
Süderdomstr. 13
24837 Slesvig

FREDERIK V

A MAN ON A HORSE...

By Trine Møller Madsen, writer on art and cultural affairs and an author

... what's so special about that? Visitors to the Amalienborg Palace Square are usually more interested in catching a glimpse of royalty behind the curtains or filming the guards with their bearskin hats and red sentry boxes.

But the equestrian statue of King Frederik V is there as well. And yes - it is something quite special. The statue is the focal point of the entire octagonal palace square, and cost more than the four royal palaces together!

Heavenly staging

The plinth shoots out of the ground and lifts the monarch into the sky. If you are standing on the ground and look up, the statue clearly stands out on the shining background. The sky emphasises the horse's beauty and graceful movements. It is in full control of its forceful muscle mass.

The royal rider on the horse is not wearing a conventional costume of the year 1760. Frederik V is in fact dressed (up) in the attire of an ancient Roman military commander. Including the laurels of the victor. The King is pulled out of everyday life and placed in an entirely different era. He is staged like a hero from ancient Rome. As an immovable ideal - in all senses of the word, since the statue weighs 22 tonnes.

The King rides towards the Marble Church (Frederik Church) which is situated in front of the palace square. What is he going to do there? Confess his faith and blatantly underline his own immortality, of course!

On a mission from France

The equestrian statue was created by the French sculptor J.F. J. Saly. He was brought to Denmark with the particular mission of immortalising the popular king on horseback. With his own eyes, Saly saw the King riding around town on his daily rides. He wrote somewhere that, with his statue, he dreamed of capturing "the happy mixture of majesty and mildness". He has succeeded with that cocktail. And he has captured much more than that.

Saly has created the ultimate representation of an absolute monarch. His magnificent specimen of an equestrian statue is considered one of the most beautiful in Europe. So don't forget to look up and enjoy the sight next time you pass Amalienborg Palace.

LINKS

Kulturkanon i undervisningen:

www.kulturkanon.emu.dk/default.asp?ID=20037

FACTS

Work:
Frederiks V's equestrian statue,
finished 1771

Artist:
Jacques-François-Joseph Saly
(1717-1776)

Work exhibited:
Amalienborg Slotsplads
1257 København K

JASON WITH THE GOLDEN FLEECE

THE WHITE HERO

By Trine Møller Madsen, writer on art and cultural affairs and an author

Jason, the prince, has just brought down a terrifying monster and snatched a golden ram's skin which is to bring him riches and the throne. Quite a feat of strength you'd think, but Thorvaldsen's marble version of the legendary Greek hero doesn't have a speck of sweat on his pale, cold brow.

Bertel Thorvaldsen loved the art and ideals of ancient Greece and Rome. Like many other contemporary artists, he was obsessed with Rome where he lived for the most of life. In Rome he was close to the two ancient sculptures, The Spearman (approx. 450 b.c.) and the Belvedere Apollo (approx 140 b.c.). Both are obvious models for Jason.

Art of balance

Thorvaldsen froze Jason somewhere between calm and movement. The struggle is over, and the hero is on his way back with his spoils over his arm. Jason expresses both physical and mental calmness. He is the prototype of the classical hero.

The sculpture itself is in perfect balance. No matter where the eyes venture, you will find a corresponding element - vertically, horizontally or diagonally. Take for example the lance/the chest strap, the fleece/the tree stump and the curled tip of the helmet's cockscomb/the ram's horn.

Almost too sensual

Notice the contrast between Jason's smooth, muscular body and the curly, loose fleece that nearly touches the thigh. It is sensual - and almost inappropriate in an era when sensuality was suppressed in favour of intellectual virtues. The art was to inspire people to become better human beings. With their heads - not their body. Thorvaldsen did shift to cooler expressions in his later works.

Although Jason was almost too sensual and exciting for the respectable citizens of the time, the sculpture immediately placed Thorvaldsen in the Premier League of European art. His pure neo-classicism was since to found a school both in Denmark and abroad. Jason's beautiful, athletic body became the male ideal in art and set the standard for Danish sculpture far into the future.

LINKS

Kulturkanon i undervisningen:

www.kulturkanon.emu.dk/default.asp?ID=20037

Thorvaldsens Museum:

www.thorvaldsensmuseum.dk/

Museets virtuelle tilbygning:

tilbygningen.dk/

FACTS

Work:

Jason with the golden Fleece, finished 1828

Artist:

Bertel Thorvaldsen (1770-1844)

Work exhibited:

Thorvaldsens Museum

Bertel Thorvaldsens

Plads 2

1213 København K

THREE ARCHES IN COLOSSEUM'S THIRD STOREY

ROME IN THE VIEWFINDER

By Trine Møller Madsen, writer on art and cultural affairs and an author

Like the photographer who finds the right crop of his motif through the viewfinder, C.W. Eckersberg (1783-1853) has chosen his quite special crop of a panoramic view of the roofs of Rome.

He found it on top of Rome's most famous antique monument, with the three arches of the Colosseum's brickwork framing the motif. In fact, the arches create three pictures in one. They work as a type of setting that stages the motif - guides the eye and helps tell the story.

By using the three peepholes in the historic brickwork, Eckersberg succeeded in creating a unique focus on Rome at the time. It was not by accident; for Eckersberg and all the artists had their eyes turned towards the Italian capital in their search for the artistic truth. The idea is of course that you should do the same.

A piece of reality?

Notice all the details (also in the title!). Everything is there. Every little straw. Every little stone. Even the smallest crack in the crude architecture. With his precise registering and reproduction. Eckersberg caught the new trend in Europe - Naturalism which aimed to picture nature as it really looked. But don't be fooled! We are not viewing an "accidental" piece of reality. Eckersberg's spectacles are not 100% objective. He has created the motif as beautiful and seductive as possible - with classical instruments such as balance and stringent, clean lines.

And then there are the contrasts in the picture creating quiet drama: the sunlight to the left and the storm clouds to the right. The wild, crudely painted nature in the foreground and, in the background, civilised urban space painted with neat brush strokes.

The father of the Golden Age painting

It was quite new - both Eckersberg's choice of motif and his inventive framing. Eckersberg was the first artist in Denmark to be interested in the landscapes and urban spaces that were to become the principal motifs of the Golden Age (app. 1815-1850). His sharp observation and precise painting technique became the ideal for the coming generation of famous, Danish painters.

LINKS

Kulturkanon i undervisningen:

www.kulturkanon.emu.dk/default.asp?ID=20037

Thorvaldsens Museum:

www.thorvaldsensmuseum.dk/

Museets virtuelle tilbygning:

tilbygningen.dk/

FACTS

Work:

View through three of the north-western arches in Colosseum's third storey, finished 1813-1816

Artist:

C.W. Eckersberg (1783-1853)

Work Exhibited:

Statens Museum for Kunst
Sølvgade 48-50
1307 København K

AUTUMN MORNING AT LAKE SORTEDAM

THE MAN, THE TREE AND THE PINK MORNING

By Trine Møller Madsen, writer on art and cultural affairs and an author

A lake, a path and a man. Two trees and some bushes. Autumn Morning at Lake Sortedam is a simple picture with hardly any action at all. And yet! The man in the picture is moving forward. Who is he? And where is he headed? And is there a connection between the dark figure and the naked tree in the foreground? The two figures are soon to meet. The painting oozes atmosphere. Maybe that's what sparks the imagination.

Pink precision

Christen Koebke was a student of C.W. Eckersberg (1783-1853) who is also represented in The Canon for Art, and was taught the virtues of the art of the golden age. This involved observing nature, intimate life and the neighbouring environment and then describing the observations as precisely and detailed as possible. This is exactly what Koebke did. Every little twig on the trees and bushes is painted.

Storytelling and drama took second place in naturalistic art. Nevertheless, it is difficult not to let the imagination flow freely in front of Koebke's atmosphere-filled painting. But initially note the vertical and horizontal lines that keep the motif in balance. Koebke had an unusual capacity for creating balance in the composition. And then he is famous for his unique sense of colour - like here where he catches and depicts a special pink-coloured morning light.

Nearly Japanese

The strong trunk, the branches and the small twigs of the tree appear clearly on the sky. It was a bold stroke to contrast the dark contours against the shining background. The result is graphic and reminds us of the expression in the simple Japanese wood engravings that were popular in Koebke's period.

The large crown of the tree makes the sky crack in front of our eyes and those of the lonely wanderer. Or is it a symbol of small veins or nerves that give life and nourishment to the morning? Perhaps it is simply a tree at a lake shore. Everything depends on the eyes that see. What do you see?

LINKS

Glyptotekets hjemmeside:
www.glyptoteket.dk/

FACTS

Work:
Autumn Morning at Lake Sortedam,
1838

Artist:
Christen Købke (1810-1848)

Work exhibited:
Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek
Dantes Plads 7
1556 København V

THE DANCE OF THE DUST IN THE RAYS OF THE SUN

ROOM IN SLOW MOTION

By Trine Møller Madsen, writer on art and cultural affairs and an author

A black and white snapshot of a deserted room. With a window and a closed door. Nothing is happening. Does it sound boring? Well, perhaps. Nevertheless, the majority of spectators are drawn into Hammershoei's deserted room from the year 1900. The title reveals that something is going on! In fact the whole picture is trembling, precisely revealing the fact that this is not a photo but a painting.

With minute brush strokes, Vilhelm Hammershoei has reproduced a stark room. It was one of his favourite motifs. Another one was women turning their backs. Both motifs appear closed and reserved. They don't give away much - at first glance. But this is exactly what makes them enigmatic and attractive.

Like a dream

The painting is stringent and geometric. It's an empty box that we, the spectator, must fill. The delicate colour scale, nearly only greys, creates a quiet poetry. The picture is inward-looking and talks to our feelings and dreams. The light that shines at an angle through the room has the title role. The precise meaning of the light is up to you. Is it a dream or a nightmare? Does the dance in the soft light appeal to you or do you want to get out of the naked room?

Open the door!

As in Hammershoei's other interior paintings, there is a way out of the intrusive emptiness in *The Dance of the Dust in the Rays of the Sun*. There are always doors - open or closed - and windows, indicating that there is a world outside. Hammershoei opened doors himself. Like many of his fellow artists he travelled in Europe and inhaled the smouldering new trends.

With his empty geometric room he turned his back to the naturalism that was taught at the Royal Art Academy. Like his fellow painter L.A. Ring, Hammershoei is a symbolist, pointing ahead towards modernism with a focus on form, colour and composition rather than the actual imagery and plot.

LINKS

Ordrupgaards hjemmeside:
www.ordrupgaard.dk/emner/forside.aspx

Kunstonline.dk om Vilhelm Hammershøi:
kunstonline.dk/kunsthistorie/1870-1905/?bio=993&kid=6

FACTS

Work:
The Dance of the Dust in the Rays of the Sun, 1900

Artist:
Vilhelm Hammershoei (1864-1916)

Work exhibited:
Ordrupgaard
Vilvordevej 110
2920 Charlottenlund

A SUMMER'S DAY ON ROSKILDE FJORD

LANDSCAPE WITH FEELING

By Trine Møller Madsen, writer on art and cultural affairs and an author

A landscape is a landscape - or is it?

There is no doubt what the painting A Summer's Day on Roskilde Fjord shows; but there is still something odd about it. Maybe it is the simple surfaces of green and blue. Maybe it is the contrast between the soft, organic coast in the foreground and the hard, tight lines in the view of the fjord and the horizon? Or is it the bold crop that lets the small group of fishing boats on the water play a secondary part - all the way out there on the edge of the set. The picture is mysterious. It is as if it wants to accomplish something more than just a beautiful view.

The mental landscape

L.A. Ring shows us that a landscape painting can do so much more than just describe nature seen from a hillside or vantage point. He clears the motif of unnecessary detail and creates a different landscape space. It is empty and indefinable. It is raised above time and place. If you cover the boats with a finger, the picture is nearly abstract. L.A. Ring changes the landscape to an inner, mental room in which the spectator can mirror his own feelings and moods. Try it yourself.

Visionary peasant painter

L.A. Ring is one of the most significant landscape painters in Danish art. He was from the country himself. Although he liked to describe nature and life among the peasants, he was not a peasant painter in the traditional sense of the word. He did not approach his art in the literal sense. He was a "symbolist". Ring often painted the road: the gravel road, the high road or - as here - a waterway, using it as a symbol of the life journey that lies ahead of all of us.

At the same time he was visionary in his art. With his quaint cropping and abstract spaces without action, he points forward towards modernism, like his colleague Hammershoei. Pictures capturing other sides of reality than the one we can see with the naked eye.

LINKS

Kulturkanon i undervisningen:

www.kulturkanon.emu.dk/default.asp?ID=20037

Randers Kunstmuseum:

www.randers-kunstmuseum.dk/

FACTS

Work:

A Summer's Day on Roskilde Fjord,
1900

Artist:

L.A. Ring (1854-1933)

Work exhibited:

Randers Kunstmuseum
Stemannsgade 2, Kulturhuset
8900 Randers

THE GREAT RELIEF

LIFE IS BIG

By Trine Møller Madsen, writer on art and cultural affairs and an author

If you don't watch out, you'll get a knee in your face. The figures wriggle with arms and legs - and with its 4.4 metres The Great Relief is so tall that your head is exactly at a level with Adam and Eve's naked knee caps. That is if you experience the picture live and not like here in a miniature reproduction.

Two and two

He/she, light/darkness, order/chaos, straight lines/curved lines - the gigantic relief is built on pairs of opposites. At the same time eight of the figures form pairs - two and two. The two men standing in water up to their navels in the middle of the picture are believed to be a double self-portrait of the artist.

The naked couple to the right stands out clearly and is the climax of the relief. In fact, they are almost on their way out of the picture. The couple is almost melted together. They are a golden symbol of the symbiosis of love. They look ahead with their arms raised. She in a defensive movement - as if in an attempt to protect their love bubble. Maybe she is afraid of being caught by the wave, which can at any time pull them out where they cannot touch bottom.

The man behind

The Great Relief is created by multi-artist J.F. Willumsen and is considered his very best sculpture. Willumsen's personal and expressive art and droll mixture of materials stood out from the expressions of his time. Even today his works seem modern.

In The Great Relief Willumsen has reproduced the feelings and conditions of a human being in the course of a lifetime through bodies in all kinds of possible and impossible positions. Join the journey and discover the meaning of the individual figures. A hint: the bright sides of life to the right and the dark sides to the left.

LINKS

Kulturkanon i undervisningen:

www.kulturkanon.emu.dk/default.asp?ID=20037

J.F. Willumsens Museum:

www.jfwillumsensmuseum.dk/

FACTS

Work:

The Great Relief, 1893-1928

Artist:

J.F. Willumsen (1863-1958)

Work exhibiteded:

J.F. Willumsens Museum

Jenriksvej 4

3600 Frederikssund

STANDING WOMAN

A NAKED WOMAN

By Trine Møller Madsen, writer on art and cultural affairs and an author

She is straight and stands on strong legs. One leg placed in front of the other. She looks ahead. The hair is short.

Standing Woman is a strong woman. She does not show herself off to the spectator. It's rather she who observes the world - with watchful eyes. It is obvious although we cannot see them. She has dignity and is in balance with herself. Her beauty comes from within. Is it surprising that Standing Woman is created by a female artist?

Courage and strength

Astrid Noack is unique in the Danish history of art. She was one of the first women to qualify as a sculptor in Denmark, and in the 1920s she left for Paris to gain further education and gather inspiration. Like her male colleagues. She was herself a "standing woman" who took issue with conventional gender roles.

Without noise

Noack created sculptures of people. Mostly women and children. Her figures do not tell stories. She is more preoccupied with the forms and lines of the sculpture and worked with very few instruments. In Standing Woman the only sign of movement is the foot position and the folded hands that are staggered from the axis of the body and therefore create a small twist of the upper body. Otherwise everything is calm. Even the surface of the body is in balance. No variations or nuances. Not even in the transition between skin and hair.

Seen with modern eyes the sculpture appears completely immovable. Maybe even boring. We are used to flickering and high speed. But perhaps that is exactly the strength of the sculpture - its tranquillity and stability. Can you feel it?

LINKS

Göteborgs Konstmuseum:

konstmuseum.goteborg.se/wps/portal/konstm/!ut/p/b1/04_SjzSxMDc1sjQ3MdaP0I

Holstebro Kunstmuseum:

www.holstebrokonstmuseum.dk/da/holstebro-kunstmuseum.aspx

Om Astrid Noack:

www.thorvaldsensmuseum.dk/udstillinger/tidligere/noack

FACTS

Work:

Standing Woman, 1937-43

Artist:

Astrid Noack (1888-1954)

Work exhibited:

Göteborgs Konstmuseum

Götaplatsen/Avenyn

412 56 Göteborg

STALINGRAD

15 SQUARE METRES OF CHAOS

By Trine Møller Madsen, writer on art and cultural affairs and an author

The large canvas speaks to the whole of the body. It measures almost 3 x 5 metres, and even though the colours are soft, it has a forceful effect. The brush strokes are fierce, and it is difficult to immediately see what is up and what is down. It is pure chaos.

Although a keen eye can spot almost all colours in the many layers of paint, the dominant colour is white. Underneath the white layer the spectator can faintly see dark shadows, and the eye can also catch the red tracks that have been pulled down across the surface. Perhaps an inner film has already begun to play in your head?

Bloody tracks in the snow

You can imagine a lot of things. We know that, as a point of departure, the painter had one picture in his head: the battle of Stalingrad, one of the bloodiest battles of World War II.

Asger Jorn was one of the founders of Cobra. This world famous group of artists sought the primitive human instinct and, as a result, painted freely and in abstract, and with focus on colour and brush strokes. Normally he and the other Cobra artists painted pictures that exploded in colour. Compared to them, Stalingrad is unusually quiet. The white colour covers the picture - like the snow that fell over the city and covered the traces of war.

Jorn wanted to show the opposite. He painted the battle of Stalingrad to bring it out into light and memory. Dug out the horror from oblivion. If you look carefully, you can faintly see the bloody bodies and the bombed-out, gutted houses under the thickly layered paint.

Reaction

Jorn knew Picasso's great, monumental painting of Guernica, that described the atrocities of the Spanish civil war. Like Picasso's masterpiece, Stalingrad is large and chaotic. Both in form and content. It takes time to experience and digest the picture.

Jorn worked on the picture for many years. The last time was just a few months before his death. While he was painting, the superpowers rearmed and the nuclear arms race was launched. Was World War III on its way? Jorn reacted to the manmade chaos with his wild brush. Facing the big canvas, it is now your turn.

LINKS

Kulturkanon i undervisningen:

www.kulturkanon.emu.dk/default.asp?ID=20037

Silkeborg Kunstmuseum:

www.museumjorn.dk/da/

Om Asger Jorn:

www.kunstonline.dk/kunsthistorie/1940-1970/?bio=2081

FACTS

Work:

Stalingrad, 1957-1972

Artist:

Asger Jorn (1914-1973)

Work exhibited:

Silkeborg Kunstmuseum

Gudenåvej 7-9

8600 Silkeborg

Design and Artwork

- 031** Viking Warship
- 032** Flora Danica
- 033** The Life Work of Thorvald Bindsøe
- 034** The Life Work of Knud V. Engelhardt
- 035** The Life Work of Marie Gudme Leth
- 036** PH Lamp series
- 037** Tea Service
- 038** Gedser Wind Turbine
- 039** The Panton Chair
- 040** Chair made of foamed polymer
- 041** The Kevi Castor
- 042** Facadesystem

VIKING WARSHIP

VIKING WONDER

By Charlotte Jul, design writer and editor at KUNSTUFF, a Danish handicraft and design magazine.

Skuldelev 2 is really a warship - the long, slender design enabled the ship to move quickly through the water.

The oak ship is 30 metres long and seated 80 oarsmen. Skuldelev 2 could hold booty of up to 25 tonnes. It had to have a very strong construction to carry all that weight. The characteristic round shields and striped sails of Skuldelev 2 are among the most common decorative features ever in fashion and graphics - indicators of the Vikings' sense of strong, simple signals.

Art and craft

The ship is one huge piece of handicraft: built with a deep sense of design and feel for wood's capacity to cope with ever changing water and wind conditions. Skuldelev 2 is a delight to the eye. One key practical feature was that when the Vikings were rowing, their shields could be fixed to the side of the ship to protect the crew from the wind and enemy arrows. This is a supreme example of art and craft combined.

War and development

The Viking expeditions were pure strategy. The Vikings came, saw and conquered and then left again. Quickly and efficiently! Today, almost 1000 years after the Viking period, war is still one of the areas on which states expend the most resources on design and invention, such as intelligent clothing with built-in sensors registering the fluid loss of soldiers or jackets with integrated click-on, click-off communication systems. The Gulf War in the 1990s was a vivid example of the key role of design and technology in modern military strategy.

LINKS

Havhingsten fra Glendalough:
www.vikingskibsmuseet.dk/

Vikingskibsmuseet i Roskilde:
www.vikingskibsmuseet.dk/

Stig om bord – handel og bådbygning i vikingetiden:
www.stigombord.dk/

FACTS

Work:
Viking Warship, approx. 1042

Artist:
Artist unknown

Work exhibited:
Vikingskibsmuseet
Vindeboder 12
4000 Roskilde

FLORA DANICA

A DINNER SERVICE FIT FOR KINGS

By Charlotte Jul, design writer and editor at KUNSTUFF, a Danish handicraft and design magazine.

Flora Danica - dating from 1790 - is a unique dinner service decorated with more than 700 Danish plant motifs.

During the Age of Enlightenment, there was a fascination with the new science of botany. This was apparent in cultural life in general, hence the lifelike depiction of the plants on the service.

Flora Danica is decorated and gold-plated by hand with handles and lids also hand-moulded. It is a dinner service fit for kings and queens, a point proved when it was commissioned by Denmark's King Christian VII in the 18th century as a gift for Catherine the Great of Russia. The Empress died before the dinner service was complete, which was a blessing in disguise, because then it remained in Denmark. Today, the original service can be studied in the basement of Rosenborg Castle in Copenhagen.

Inspiration and decoration

Imagine being allowed to eat lasagne off such a plate! Flora Danica got a new image in 1863, when the least appetising flower motifs were omitted. The dinner service has been in production ever since - at prices ranging from DKK 2,100 to DKK 182,900, Flora Danica is the Rolls-Royce of dinner services. Incredibly, it is still in demand more than 200 years after it was designed, with sales running into millions worldwide.

The Flora Danica dinner service is proof that good workmanship and rich decoration are not mutually exclusive. There is an interest in both today with the revival of decoration and patterns and people's taste for mixing antiques, flea market bargains and designer items to express a more personal lifestyle.

Natural talent

Nature was the direct source of inspiration of the detailed patterns of Flora Danica. In Spain, nature was an inexhaustible source of inspiration for architect and designer Antoni Gaudí (1852-1926), among others. Gaudí modelled his spectacular buildings and mosaics on the soft and colourful shapes of nature. If you have ever visited Guell Park in Barcelona, where the park furniture is incorporated in the landscape, you will understand why.

In 1930s Denmark, textile designer Marie Gudme Leth was deeply inspired by the Flora Danica dinner service, and recently clothes designer Anette Meyer has created dresses with Flora Danica motifs.

LINKS

Flora danica online <http://www.kb.dk/da/tema/floradanica/index.html>

Royal Copenhagen <http://www.royalcopenhagen.com/da/home?lang=true>

Flora danica - en virtuel udstilling <http://wayback.kb.dk:8080/wayback-1.4.2/wayback/20100107153228/http://www2.kb.dk/udstillinger/floradanica99/index.html>

FACTS

Work:
Flora danica (1752-1803)

Artist:
Several artists

Work exhibited:
Rosenborg Slot
Øster Voldgade 4A
1350 København K

THE LIFE WORK OF THORVALD BINDESBOELL

FASCINATING DECORATION

By Charlotte Jul, design writer and editor at KUNSTUFF, a Danish handicraft and design magazine.

Thorvald Bindsboell was a Danish Picasso when it came to using decoration to catch the viewer's attention.

Bindsboell's sense of challenging, simple, yet rounded and sensuous expression is unparalleled.

The archives of the Danish Museum of Art & Design hold between 6,000 and 7,000 Bindsboell drawings. When in 1925, after his death, Bindsboell's drawings were submitted to the Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes in Paris, they attracted great interest. The French were keen to get the address of this visionary artist ...

Multitudinous aspects of craft

Dishes, pots, bookbinding, posters, logos, furniture, silverware, textiles and houses. Thorvald Bindsboell trained as an architect like his father and among his commissions were the fishing warehouses (Fiskehusene) in Skagen, north Jutland and several private villas round Denmark. But he became interested in design and his life-long engagement echoed far into the future. Today, Bindsboell is a must for students of all creative disciplines because his works remain utterly modern and up-to-date.

A master of his time

Bindsboell's innovative style combined the familiar with the unknown. Japanese crafts were among the many sources of inspiration that he converted into his own original expression. Bindsboell made a real name for himself with his ceramic works. The forceful, rich decorations turn dishes and pots into sensuous works, hungrily attracting the beholder's attention.

For more than 20 years, Bindsboell worked with ceramics, only to switch to silver in collaboration with goldsmith Holger Kyster of Kolding, west Denmark. Bindsboell also created unique silver works that were copied by other goldsmiths - never mind the copyright!

Leading graphic artist

Next to ceramics, Bindsboell is probably best known for his graphic design. He designed typefaces, book jackets, paper and logos for commercial enterprises. Bindsboell combines a richly decorative style with graphic simplicity in a fusion of art and graphics. The Carlsberg beer label in particular is world-renowned and a recognised classic. Think about that the next time you are having one!

LINKS

Kulturkanon i undervisningen:

www.kulturkanon.emu.dk/default.asp?ID=20032

FACTS

Work:

The Life Work of Thorvald Bindsboell

Artist:

Thorvald Bindsboell (1846-1908)

Work exhibited:

The Danish Museum of Decorative Art
Bredgade 68
1260 København K

THE LIFE WORK OF KNUD V. ENGELHARDT

FASCINATING DECORATION

By Charlotte Jul, design writer and editor at KUNSTUFF, a Danish handicraft and design magazine.

Functionality: the key to good design

Knud V. Engelhardt was an architect and designed everything from trams to typefaces, cutlery and door handles. But he is probably best known for his street signs for the Municipality of Gentofte, a Copenhagen suburb, where the j's are dotted with little red hearts. They signal warm-heartedness and open arms in an otherwise industrial design, proving the point that that a sign is not just a sign.

Knud V. Engelhardt was one of the very first industrial designers in Denmark. He was of the opinion that it is the duty of the public authorities to create good design for the benefit of the multitude. A case in point is the 1910 Copenhagen public transport tram. Here, Engelhardt was in charge of everything from draft design and industrial manufacturing to the interior and exterior design of the trams.

Urban design

Advertising pillars are another example of urban design. Their mushroom shape protects them from wind and weather. And their roundness at the bottom keeps dogs from lifting their legs on them. The advertising pillar is simple and functional while at the same time rotund and inviting. This combination of tight functionality and soft humanism is characteristic of Scandinavian Modern, the style that Denmark would later become so famous for.

Today, urban design is an independent discipline. Designs for urban spaces are created at architects' offices all over the world to provide coherence between urban expression and function. Lamp posts, benches, promenades and buildings are all capable of tying urban districts together. For a city is not just a city either. A city only lives if people use it. And people will only use cities if they work and are a pleasant place to be in. Think about that next time you go for a walk in your city.

Engelhardt's graphic talent

Knud V. Engelhardt was a 'multi-designer', but he made a name for himself in the graphic industry. Engelhardt designed typefaces and his graphic design still inspires young designers today. The graphic artists at the Danish bureau Spild af Tid (Waste of Time), experts in mixing genres like graffiti, free-hand drawing, collage and classical graphic elements, are inspired by old type masters like Engelhardt, Achton Friis and Biilmann Petersen.

LINKS

Skilte og byinventar i Gentofte Kommune: [LINK VIRKER IKKE!!](#)

FACTS

Work:
Life work of Knud V. Engelhardt

Artist:
Knud V. Engelhardt (1882-1931)

THE LIFE WORK OF MARIE GUDME LETH

PATTERN INTRICACY

By Charlotte Jul, design writer and editor at KUNSTUFF, a Danish handicraft and design magazine.

Wow! Marie Gudme Leth is the uncontested master of Danish textile design.

Her patterns are intricate, prolific, unique, exotic and even trendy today when nature and patterns are once again important elements of fashion, art and living. Gudme Leth set a fashion and made a regular science of composition, form, colours and textile printing. All her patterns were drawn by hand and printed on textile in a long and arduous work process that could take weeks. One of her patterns, Calicot, was even converted into a wallpaper by the Dahl Brothers wallpaper factory.

Light and hard work

The life work of Marie Gudme Leth is important because it comprises several landmarks. She made textile printing a recognised art form and hyped up the craft. As a teacher at the School of Decorative Art in Denmark (Kunsthåndværkerskolen), she influenced a whole generation of students, including Arne Jacobsen's wife, Jonna, who created a number of beautiful textiles in collaboration with Arne in the 1950s. On top of that Gudme Leth was an ambitious and independent woman who was passionate about her craft - a feminist in today's perspective.

Her obvious fascination with and travels to 'unknown' places such as Java, Mexico, Turkey and Egypt made her atypical. Many of her works reflected this inspiration. Through her participation in three world exhibitions in 1937, 1939 and 1955, she contributed to the world fame of Danish textile design.

Who'll be first?

To Gudme Leth, nature with its birds, leaves and flowers was a treasury of incredible colours and shapes.

Her Swedish counterpart was Josef Frank and their idioms with nature as the primary source of inspiration are very alike. Josef Frank has experienced a great renaissance in recent years and like Gudme Leth he was incredibly productive. Frank created more than 200 different patterns of which some are now available through Svensk Tenn in Malmö. Finnish Marimekko has also seen a revival in the last four years - and the market is ready for more! I prophesy that Marie Gudme Leth's wallpapers and textiles will have a similar renaissance. They can be seen by appointment at the Danish Museum of Art & Design in Copenhagen.

I wonder who will be the first to put her textiles into production?

LINKS

Kulturkanon i undervisningen:

www.kulturkanon.emu.dk/default.asp?ID=20032

Dansk kvindebiografisk leksikon:

www.kvinfo.dk/side/171/bio/973/

FACTS

Work:

The life work of Marie Gudme Leths

Artist:

Marie Gudme Leth (1895-1997)

Work exhibited:

Museum of Decorative Art

Bredgade 68

1260 København K

PH LAMP SERIES

MASTER OF LAMP-MAKING

By Charlotte Jul, design writer and editor at KUNSTUFF, a Danish handicraft and design magazine.

“Lighting that does not allow large objects to cast a shadow, gives the room a dismal and dull expression” (Light Years Ahead: The Story of the PH Lamp)

Imagine being so wrapped up in your profession! Poul Henningsen, or “PH” as he was commonly known, was something of a light nerd and a gifted inventor. Throughout his life, he developed lampshades to improve the quality of light in the room.

Shade solution

Poul Henningsen discovered that frosted-surface shades reflected light without any glare. And that the curve of the shade controlled the direction of light. So-called PH lamps became world-famous because of these practical features and their sculptural design. The powerful multi-layered design of PH Artichoke, created for Copenhagen’s waterfront Langelinie Pavilion in 1958, can still be seen in the restaurant today.

The Norm 69 lamp puzzle designed by architect Simon Karkov in 1969 and put into production by Normann Copenhagen in 2002, makes several references to the PH Artichoke, although Norm 69 has its own unique puzzle design with no glue or tools needed for assembly.

Everything interconnected

Everything was interconnected for PH. His improved lamp designs became a major hit that would turn out to have a positive impact on production and health and safety at work, but not least on people’s quality of life. PH was not just a designer. He was an ardent social critic, founding the Critical Revue (Kritisk Revy) magazine in 1926 in addition to writing books, revue songs and discussion pieces for other media.

Design to improve Life

PH expressed his social engagement in his design work. He wanted his inventions to make a difference; beauty and elegance were not enough. PH’s designs are fusions of invention, design and workmanship. His opinion that design should make a difference is reflected even today, for example in the world’s most important design and innovation prizes awarded by Danish Index:2005 - “Design to improve Life”. According to Index, design is one of the media capable of solving specific problems in the third world such as polluted drinking water. “Lifestraw”, a straw that filters water when it is sucked up, was awarded one of the prizes. This just shows that contemporary design - in the true spirit of PH - is capable of improving the lives of many people.

LINKS

Kulturkanon i undervisningen:

www.kulturkanon.emu.dk/default.asp?ID=20032

Louis Poulsen:

www.louispoulsen.com/da

FACTS

Work:

PH’s lampshadesystem (from 1925 and still developing)

Artist:

Poul Henningsen (1894-1967)

Work exhibited:

The Danish Museum of Art & Design
Bredgade 68
1260 København K

TEA SERVICE

ANGULAR HARMONY

By Charlotte Jul, design writer and editor at KUNSTUFF, a Danish handicraft and design magazine.

Vasegaard's tea set consists of eight individually shaped items: the cups are round, the tea caddy is rectangular, the teapot is six-sided and the cake dish is eight-sided.

Strange as it may sound, the angular tea set forms a harmonious whole. The inspiration from China is evident in both the teapot and the tea caddy, but then china is a Chinese invention, isn't it?

In general, it's impossible to avoid the oriental inspiration in the work of Danish ceramic artists. Gertrud Vasegaard's generation as well as present-day designers have a tendency to look to the East. The affinity with clean-cut Scandinavian functionalism is obvious. In Danish ceramics, Japanese severity is transformed into functional form and sensuous quality. For as a Dane would say, a pot is useless if it can't pour!

First brood of ceramic artists

Gertrud Vasegaard was in the first ceramics class to graduate from the School of Decorative Art in Denmark in 1930. A third-generation potter, she learnt the art of pottery at an early age, and for several years, Gertrud and her sister shared the same career and workshop on the Baltic island of Bornholm. Later on Gertrud's daughter Myre, also trained as a ceramic artist and shared a workshop with her mother.

Unruly dots

Starting in 1945, Vasegaard was on the staff of the Bing & Grøndahl porcelain factory for ten years. This was where she designed her tea set. The ferruginous clay left small black dots in the glaze of the tea set after firing. Vasegaard insisted on keeping these dots, although it was commonly thought that they were a sign of poor quality. Vasegaard was proved right in the end: the 'imperfections' give life and texture to the set despite their industrial origin. The unruly dots signal that the tea set was shaped by hands - and should be used by hands.

Gertrud Vasegaard is also well-known for her decorative style. Her rhombuses and oblique, angular lines in particular have set a fashion. Her life work and her professional approach to her craft have influenced many contemporary Danish ceramic artists like Ole Jensen, Ursula Munch Petersen and Bodil Manz. Examples of Vasegaard's considerable production are exhibited at the Danish Museum of Art & Design.

LINKS

Dansk kvindebiografisk leksikon:
www.kvinfo.dk/side/170/bio/1385/

FACTS

Work:
Tea Service (1956)

Artist:
Gertrud Vasegaard (1913-2007)

Work exhibited:
The Danish Museum of Art & Design
Bredgade 68
1260 København K

GEDSER WIND TURBINE

WIND POWER

By Charlotte Jul, design writer and editor at KUNSTUFF, a Danish handicraft and design magazine.

For many years, the Gedser Wind Turbine, situated in southeast Denmark, was the largest in the world. Johannes Juul designed the turbine in 1956-57, and to this day wind turbines are built according to largely the same principles - with the added bonus of modern technology, of course.

When in 1975 the USA first embarked on wind energy research, NASA used the Gedser Wind Turbine as a model.

The Gedser Wind Turbine became a symbol of Green Denmark, paving the way for the sustainable 'windmill' at the Tvind School Centre in west Denmark, among others. And the world's leading wind turbine manufacturer is Vestas Wind Systems situated in Randers, also on west Denmark's Jutland peninsula. The Danish network of wind producers, suppliers and specialists is unsurpassed in the world. Furthermore, the Gedser Wind Turbine proved extremely tenacious - remaining in operation for 11 years without problems. Today, parts of it are exhibited at the Electricity Museum near Bjerringbro.

Beautiful design that makes a difference

Wind turbines are magnificent! You may have seen them at the entrance to Ebeltoft, Jutland along the Amager shore, near Copenhagen or on fields scattered around Denmark. Their slim bodies and the large wings combine sculptural form and reliable function. Nature itself is the source of the sustainable energy produced by the non-polluting turbine. 20 per cent of Denmark's electricity is supplied by wind turbines. Something to be proud of.

Trade interaction

Design and technology make a good industrial team. In the old days, the designer was not called in until the final product development phase. Today, designers and experts often work together during the entire development process - from idea to final product. This, combined with new knowledge, assures far better, more coherent solutions and significant results.

Danish design helps

Danish industry holds a leading position in the field of aids and appliances such as wheelchairs for children, pants with built-in girdle for ostomy patients and handy insulin pens for people with diabetes. These are all examples of Danish design created in a collaboration between designers and experts such as engineers, technicians, doctors and nurses. Talk about creative art that makes the world a better place!

Links

Kulturkanon i undervisningen: www.kulturkanon.emu.dk/default.asp?ID=20032

Elmuseet: www.elmuseet.net.dynamicweb.dk/Default.aspx?ID=103

Poul la Cour Museet: www.poullacour.dk/dansk/menu.htm

Winds of change: www.windsofchange.dk/

FACTS

Work:
Gedser Wind Turbin (1957)

Artist:
Johannes Juul (1887-1969)

Work exhibited:
The Electricity Museum
Bjerringbrovej 44
8850 Bjerringbro

THE PANTON CHAIR

SHAPE AND COLOUR

By Charlotte Jul, design writer and editor at KUNSTUFF, a Danish handicraft and design magazine.

The Panton Chair was the first single-form injection- moulded plastic chair in the world, anticipating the 21st century in many ways. First of all the chair was moulded in the new material: plastic. Secondly, it was in one piece. Panton's pioneering style has inspired leading present-day designers such as Karim Rashid, Ron Arad, Ross Lovegrove and Philippe Starck.

Panton's wildly shaped furniture, loud colours and tacky plastic were unpopular at first. Plastic was definitely a low-status material. Who on earth would want it in their living room? Popular Danish taste did not quite know what to make of him. And it is always easy to criticise what you don't understand. As a result, the Danish 'enfant terrible' moved to Switzerland - his potential was appreciated abroad.

Innovative furniture

Today, no one doubts Verner Panton's visual talent and he has finally achieved the recognition in Denmark he deserves. Verner Panton is currently one of the most recognised Danish designer in the world, because his design has come into fashion again. Producers are fighting to put his lamps, textiles, carpets and furniture into production.

Panton's sweeping shapes and atypical seats challenged the common way of using the body. But in those days, people found it hard to understand why they should lounge about or lie in a chair or climb up into a furniture tower, when they were normally used to sitting opposite each other.

Bright-coloured plastic

Panton's colour scheme and curiosity concerning materials challenged the hand-made wooden furniture of the day and was, seen in hindsight, quite revolutionary.

Panton, the self-exiled Dane, had no inhibitions when it came to colours, which he believed had mood-altering qualities. Today, strong colours have had a revival in the world of furniture, handicrafts and design and plastic is now an accepted material that is no longer in bad taste. Verner Panton boldly went against the tide. For that he deserves respect!

LINKS

Kulturkanon i undervisningen:

www.kulturkanon.emu.dk/default.asp?ID=20032

Officiel hjemmeside for Verner Panton Design:

www.verner-panton.com/

FACTS

Work:

The Panton Chair (1960)

Artist:

Verner Panton (1926-1998)

Work exhibited:

The Danish Museum of Art & Design

Bredgade 68

1260 København K

CHAIR MADE OF FOAMED POLYMER

MULTI-TALENT

By Charlotte Jul, design writer and editor at KUNSTUFF, a Danish handicraft and design magazine.

Gunnar Aagaard Andersen was sculptor, architect, designer and painter. His artistic starting point was somewhere between simple minimalism and abstract, colourful expressionism. Aagaard Andersen created everything from interiors and wallpaper to textiles, sculptures and furniture.

The Chair made of foamed polymer is the work of the artist as well as the designer. The challenge and experiment consisted in creating a piece of furniture in one process, in one unbroken form and in one material - a comment on Chesterfield furniture. Imagine how amazing this chair must have been in a time without colour TV and the Internet!

Material as the designer

Aagaard Andersen was fascinated by the whipped cream-like polyether material consisting of urethane, water and freon. It had a life of its own thanks to gravitation. He poured out the liquid material layer by layer. When it dried, it became strong and took on a tempered, leathery surface.

Importance of the artistic touch

Gunnar Aagaard Andersen is particularly interesting, because his work spanned different disciplines and skills - well ahead of his time. His artistic approach to design was an inspiration to furniture manufacturers, designers and architects alike, because it differed from what they were used to.

The Chair made of foamed polymer was and remains an icon. In 1966, the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York purchased the chair for its permanent design collection and four other chairs have been sold to museums around the world. In Denmark, it is part of the furniture collection of the Danish Museum of Art & Design.

Aagaard's far-reaching inspiration

Today, Gunnar Aagaard Andersen remains an example for many designers. Ceramic artist Ole Jensen, himself represented in the shop at MoMA, is strongly inspired by Aagaard Andersen, and designers Nanna and Jørgen Ditzel designed several interiors in collaboration with Aagaard. Other design icons such as Poul Henningsen, Hans Wegner and Arne Jacobsen also worked together with the multi-talented artist. Internationally, Aagaard Andersen's ability to depart from the predictable influenced the Pop Art movement and early postmodernism, among other schools.

LINKS

Kulturkanon i undervisningen

Kunstindustrimuseets undervisningsmateriale til kulturkanon

FACTS

Work:
Chair made of foamed polymer (1964)

Artist:
Gunnar Aagaard Andersen (1919-1982)

Work exhibited:
The Danish Museum of Art & Design
Bredgade 68
1260 København K

THE KEVI CASTOR

SMALL WHEEL, BIG CHANGE

By Charlotte Jul, design writer and editor at KUNSTUFF, a Danish handicraft and design magazine.

A wheel that rolls effortlessly. The thought is almost ridiculous. We have become so used to everything just working. The invention of the Kevi Castor led to considerable improvements in many offices in the years after 1965. Before that, office chairs had been heavy, unwieldy pieces of furniture that couldn't easily be moved.

Health and safety on the agenda

The Kevi twin-wheel castor has been developed and enhanced since Jørgen Rasmussen first invented it in 1965. It now comes in a soft version that doesn't scratch wooden floors, and an anti-static version that doesn't generate electricity when rolling across carpets. The Kevi Castor received the Danish Design Centre ID Prize in 1998, because the "product solved an important and relevant task in a sustainable way".

Concepts of 'health and safety' and 'ergonomics' emerged in the 1970s and have influenced working life ever since. Suddenly, there was a correct way to sit and tables needed to have the right height. Jørgen Rasmussen designed the Kevi Castor while working on an office chair for Fritz Hansen furniture manufacturers. The Kevi chair became one of the most popular office chairs in the 1970s, and to this day it can be found in many educational establishments all over Denmark. You may not even have noticed that you are sitting on a Kevi chair, because it is that common.

International success

The Kevi Castor quickly achieved world fame and it is produced today by ScanCastor - a Danish company that is still going strong despite keen competition from China, among other countries. Danish design, technology and innovation guarantee Danish jobs and recognition in the global challenge. When it comes to castors, there is no better alternative than the Kevi Castor. The Kevi chair was also selected for the Danish Design Project in 2004, when the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York was furnished with Danish design, which is seen there by 15-17,000 visitors every day.

Links

[Kevistole hos Fritz Hansen Møbler](#)

[Kunstindustrimuseets undervisningsmateriale til kulturkanon](#)

FACTS

Work:
The Kevi Castor, 1965

Artist:
Jørgen Rasmussen (1931)

FACADESYSTEM

LIGHT AS A CONDITION OF LIFE

By Charlotte Jul, design writer and editor at KUNSTUFF, a Danish handicraft and design magazine.

We are fascinated by glass and transparency. It lets us look in and out. But best of all it lets in the light. Imagine a building made of a material that becomes transparent when hit by light. Or whole glass facades where the frames become invisible ...

Practical challenge

Since the construction of the first skyscraper in Chicago in 1885, glass and steel facades came to serve as models for the Bauhaus movement in Germany and Le Corbusier in France, among others. At the same time, the combination of glass and steel also posed a practical challenge, because it tends to turn cold or burning hot according to the temperature. Today, double and triple glazing have solved the problems of insulation.

Major improvement

The Fiberline Facade System consists of window frames constructed in a new composite material. GRP composite is made up of glass filaments and polyester mixed to slightly resemble wood. When backlighted it reveals long glass filaments like veins in a piece of wood. Researchers have been testing the material for several years. Buildings with composite window frames have better insulation properties and much lower energy consumption. The Fiberline Facade System also lets more light into the building, because the frames are thinner than usual and become translucent in sunlight. A practical feature in Scandinavia where we have so little natural light in the winter months.

Strong and brittle glass

Glass is strong, yet brittle. By applying glass filaments, you get the glass to work with the glass in frames and windows, which is an advantage, since heat makes glass expand and cold makes it contract. The Fiberline Facade System thus achieves three objectives at once: beauty, increased durability and better insulation.

You will be able to see the Fiberline Facade System for yourself when the new sports and activity centre in Birkerød, north of Copenhagen, is finished in 2007.

Links

schmidt hammer lassen:
www.shl.dk/

FACTS

Work:
Facade System (2006)

Artist:
Fiberline Composites og schmidt
hammer lassen

Work exhibited:
Birkerød Idræts- og Aktivitetscenter
Bistrupvej 1
3460 Birkerød
Denmark

Read more about Facade System
<http://shl.dk/dan/news/kanoniseret-facadesystem-har-verdenspremiere-pa-birkerod-idraets-og-aktivitetscenter>

Film

- 044** Thou Shalt Honour Thy Wife
- 045** Day of Wrath
- 046** Ditte, Child of Man
- 047** The Soldier and Jenny
- 048** Hunger
- 049** Benny's Bath Tub
- 050** Matador
- 051** Tree of Knowledge
- 052** Babette's Feast
- 053** Pelle the Conqueror
- 054** The Celebration

THOU SHALT HONOUR THY WIFE

THE DOMESTIC TYRANT

By Christian Monggaard, film reviewer and critic for the daily newspaper Information.

The housewife starts her day at 6 am. She lights the fire, cooks breakfast and makes coffee, dresses the children and gets ready for her husband, the master of the house, to get out of bed.

Grumblingly, without expressing a word of thanks, the man sits down at the table. He has had a bad night's sleep and uses every opportunity to nag his wife and children. Disappointed and distressed, she tries to make good the damage, but to no avail. It is just one of many days when the husband tyrannises the little home. How much must she put up with?

Respect and tolerance

Finally, the housewife has had enough and escapes. The doctor says she has had a nervous breakdown and prescribes peace and quiet. The husband and the children are left alone with the old nanny called "Mads". And gradually the deserted tyrant realises that he misses his wife terribly. He understands that he has taken her for granted and never appreciated her hard work with house and children.

Even though *Thou Shalt Honour Thy Wife* is 80 years old it is still a very modern, topical film. It is all about respect and tolerance between the sexes - a much larger and thornier problem at the time of Dreyer than today. The poor living conditions of women in a male-dominated society is an important theme in many of Dreyer's films.

Relieving humour

Dreyer skilfully uses both stern drama and humorous relief in the film, as in the scene when the wizened little nanny Mads puts the grown-up man in his place with authority. Mathilde Nielsen plays this character with fine touches of humour. The film is based on a play by Svend Rindom and was shot at Dreyer's request in a small, cramped set to emphasise the closeness of domestic family life.

Even though Dreyer already had made films in Sweden and Germany, *Thou Shalt Honour Thy Wife* was his international breakthrough. Later on he went abroad, notably to France, where he was to create his absolute masterpiece *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (*Jeanne d'Arcs lidelse og død*).

LINKS

Det Danske Filminstitut:

www.dfi.dk/faktaofilm/nationalfilmografien/nffilm.aspx?id=14230

Engelsk hjemmeside om Carl Theodor Dreyer:

www.carldreyer.com/

FACTS

Work:

Thou Shalt Honour Thy Wife, 1925

Instructor:

Carl Theodor Dreyer (1889-1968)

Duration:

115 min.

DAY OF WRATH

DEATH AT THE STAKE

By Christian Monggaard, film reviewer and critic for the daily newspaper Information.

Is she a witch or not? Can she bewitch and kill people by means of evil? These are two of the questions that are left unanswered after having seen Carl Th. Dreyer's historic drama about the eternal triangle: Day of Wrath.

The film takes place in the superstitious Denmark of the 17th century, where the burning of witches is a daily event (see clip). A young woman, Anne, has married a much older priest, and she falls in love with the priest's grown-up son, Martin. Impulsive Anne goes through a major change. She starts to question her marriage and wants her husband dead.

Timeless story

It is not a coincidence that Dreyer decided to make Day of Wrath during the World War Two occupation of Denmark. It was also a period when suspicion was enough to put a life at risk. But the film is at the same time a timeless story about the power of love, faith and superstition. Inspired by Dutch art, Dreyer hypnotises us with gliding camera movements and beautifully composed pictures stripped of extraneous features.

Indisputable masterpiece

Playing Anne with the eyes of an innocent child, Lisbeth Movin has a radiating power that alternates between surprise, sadness, knowledge and malice. It is an intense portrait of a woman, which only Dreyer could create.

Day of Wrath was given a regular panning in the press when it first came out, but today the film considered a masterpiece all around the world, Dreyer's most admired sound film.

LINKS

Kulturkanon i undervisningen:

www.kulturkanon.emu.dk/default.asp?ID=20033

Engelsk hjemmeside om Carl Th. Dreyer:

www.carldreyer.com/

Det Danske Filminstitut:

www.dfi.dk/faktaomfilm/nationalfilmografien/nffilm.aspx?id=2609

FACTS

Work:

Day of Wrath, 1943

Instructor:

Carl Theodor Dreyer (1889-1968)

Duration:

105 min.

DITTE, CHILD OF MAN

INDOMITABLE OPTIMIST

By Christian Monggaard, film reviewer and critic for the daily newspaper Information.

All the time you fear that she will succumb, little Ditte, Child of Man. She believes in the good in everybody she meets. Therefore she is an easy target. Fortunately she is also an indomitable optimist and stronger than most people.

Ditte is born out of wedlock and lives as a young girl with her old beloved grandmother. As an illegitimate child she is teased in school and more than anything in the world she wants a father. When steady - utterly reliable - herring dealer Lars Petter shows up and tells her that he is marrying Ditte's mother, the little girl is very happy.

Now Ditte must take care of three new sisters and brothers but gets nothing but complaints from her ungrateful, selfish mother. But the little girl finds consolation and support in both her sisters and brothers and Lars Petter. Also when she gets work from the tyrannical mistress of Hill Farm, whose spineless son Karl gets her pregnant.

Everyday life heroine

As is the case with Pelle the Conqueror (Pelle Erobreren) - directed by Bille August - Ditte, Child of Man is based on the first part of a novel by Martin Andersen Nexoe. But Bjarne Henning Jensen - who directed the film along with his wife Astrid - is more true to the socialist author's intentions than August, who chose to make a film about a father and his son.

Ditte, Child of Man is about courage in facing life and the desire to survive - manifested in a girl with a big heart. Ditte is one of the heroines of everyday life and is played with both sensitivity and drive by actress Tove Maës who emanates total honesty in the part.

Unsophisticated and unvarnished

The black and white film depicts life in the countryside about 100 years ago in an unvarnished and evocative manner. It was shown at film festivals and praised as a work in tune with the Italian neo-realism that revolutionised the cinematic art by telling everyday stories about ordinary people.

Ditte, Child of Man, ran at cinemas in many parts of the world. But a scene where Ditte bathes nude in a lake, quite a daring thing to show in a film at that time, was cut by the Americans.

LINKS

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www.kulturkanon.emu.dk/default.asp?ID=20033

FACTS

Work:

Ditte, Child of Man, 1946

Instructor:

Bjarne Henning-Jensen (1908-1995)
(Astrid Henning-Jensen, 1914-2002)

Duration:

104 min.

THE SOLDIER AND JENNY

SHADOWS FROM THE PAST

By Christian Monggaard, film reviewer and critic for the daily newspaper Information.

For a while two humble characters find each other and the desire to live in Johan Jacobsen's moving and poetic love drama from post-war Copenhagen.

Subtle humour is used to depict the period and the environment. But above all, the film's depiction of two people - a common soldier and a young waitress, played by the superstars of that time, Poul Reichhardt and Bodil Kjer (see clip) - reflects black melancholy and despair. The soldier helps her and she is attracted to him and his awkwardness. Happiness seems to be within reach. But shadows from the past threaten to destroy the delicate idyll.

Lord's patchwork

"The Lord's patchwork" is how the soldier refers to the stream of coincidences which he feels make up life. To him, skill and luck are the same - no matter what you do or what your competences are, chance determines your life. And as the love drama unfolds, Johan Jacobsen discusses concepts such as destiny, God and man's free will.

Johan Jacobsen wrote the script based on a play by Danish playwright Soya. Soya was notorious for provoking his contemporaries by questioning sexual morality and exposing hypocrisy.

Double standards and abortion

The Soldier and Jenny demonstrates how double standards exist in established society, addressing such issues as illegal foeticide - abortion was not permitted in Denmark until 1973. To many girls and women, the health and emotional implications of unauthorised interventions by abortionists were severe. But as a woman character in the film says, "Women who want to terminate a pregnancy will always find a way to do so."

Johan Jacobsen was most famous for his glib elegant comedies at the time he made The Soldier and Jenny. Several of the characters surrounding the unfortunate young couple show signs of this cynical wit. But the film is a brilliant illustration that Jacobsen was also capable of staging an intense and in many ways timeless drama.

LINKS

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FACTS

Work:

The Soldier and Jenny, 1947

Instructor:

Johan Jacobsen (1912-1972)

Duration:

96 min.

HUNGER

UNFORGETTABLE RENDEZVOUS

By Christian Monggaard, film reviewer and critic for the daily newspaper Information.

We are in Kristiania (today's Oslo), capital of Norway, in 1890.

A shabby young writer wanders aimlessly around, hungry and penniless. He is evicted from his rented room because he cannot pay the rent. He gives his last money to a tramp in an attempt to preserve his self-respect.

He puts on an act for himself and his surroundings. Raises his hat and is courteous as if he were a fine gentleman without a care in the world. But no one, not even he himself, is taken in. In the end he has no more things to pawn. The pawnbroker will not accept his glasses, the buttons of his jacket or the worn blanket he is carrying under his arm.

He tries - unsuccessfully - to get work at a grocer's. He writes an article for a newspaper. It is accepted, but he does not get the money until the following day and then he immediately gives it away. This makes him feel good. He falls in love with a beautiful young woman he sees in the street (see clip) and he has an unforgettable rendezvous with her in her flat.

Scaring intensity

Henning Carlsen's hypnotising film about the starving artist is based on a novel by world-famous Norwegian writer Knut Hamsun. The lead part is played by Swedish actor Per Oscarsson. He won an award at the Cannes Film Festival 1966 for his almost scarily intense performance.

We experience Kristiania through the writer. Either he is in the picture or we see the surroundings through his eyes. We take part in his despair and understand his need to keep up appearances. He declines any offer of help - in this way he maintains his dignity. But for how long can he go on living like that?

Art and suffering

In the writer's opinion, an artist is above material things. Perhaps it is hunger and suffering that enables him to write and be an artist. Hunger in itself has become an artistic project.

The American writer Paul Auster calls Hunger the best filming of a work of literature he has ever seen.

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www.ekko.dk/artikler/sult/

Det Danske Filminstitut:

www.dfi.dk/faktaofilm/nationalfilmografien/nffilm.aspx?id=4936

Henning Carlsen Film:

henning-carlsen.com/

FACTS

Work:

Hunger, 1966

Instructor:

Henning Carlsen (f. 1927)

Duration:

111 min.

BENNY'S BATH TUB

FUN AND GAMES

By Christian Monggaard, film reviewer and critic for the daily newspaper Information.

“It is almost impossible to turn one’s back a single moment”, says Benny’s grumpy mother. She has just come home and has found her son engaged in turning the living room into a regular battle zone. Now Benny must go out and play - but that is not nearly as funny, he thinks.

Benny catches a tadpole in a lake close to the grey concrete block where he lives. His mother thinks that this is disgusting little creature, but when Benny puts it in his bath tub and follows its progress below the surface of the water, he is taken on a wonderful journey.

The tadpole turns out to be an enchanted prince and along with him Benny meets among others three beautiful, but affected mermaids, a conceited crab door keeper, two silly pirate skeletons that keep mocking each other and want to fight all the time and a funky octopus poised for fun and games.

Remember your inner child

Jannik Hastrup and Flemming Quist Moeller’s Benny’s Bath Tub is an entertaining film for both adults and children to watch together. The loose, almost improvised cartoon style of the animation ensures the special charm of the film, which disarms us with its batty ideas, jolly, jazzy music and colourful characters.

This sparkling, inventive film is based on a picturebook by Flemming Quist Moeller dating from 1969. It is about the inner child in all of us - a zestful, dry satire on all those boring adults who spend more time complaining and discussing washing powder than playing with their children.

Power of imagination

For 40 years Jannik Hastrup has produced the sort of cartoon films he wants to see himself. He believes that animation is an art form for adults as well as children. Along with his permanent, creative partners - Flemming Quist Moeller and Bent Haller - Hastrup has never been afraid of challenging his audiences.

Hastrup comes from the youth revolution in the 1960s and 70s and the political scene of that time. He often tells tough stories that are critical of society, but his tales can often be funny - with animals as main characters. Benny’s Bath Tub is a film about the cheerful individual in a stifling society. It is also a wonderful tribute to the power of the imagination, joie de vivre and productive anarchy.

LINKS

Det Danske Filminstitut:

www.dfi.dk/faktaomfilm/nationalfilmografien/nffilm.aspx?id=24

FACTS

Work:

Benny’s Bath Tub, 1971

Instructors:

Jannik Hastrup (f. 1941) and Flemming Quist Møller (f. 1942)

Duration:

43 min.

MATADOR

A MAN GETS OFF THE TRAIN

By Christian Monggaard, film reviewer and critic for the daily newspaper Information.

The year is 1929. A man and his little son get off the train in the imaginary provincial town of Korsbaek. Nothing is ever quite the same again.

The TV series Matador written by writer and journalist Lise Noergaard and directed by Erik Balling is still the best Danish TV series ever made. All 24 episodes of the saga were produced by Nordisk Film and have been shown five times on Danish television since the premiere in 1978. In a vivid and gripping way, Matador describes life in Korsbaek over almost 20 years through two generations of the families Andersen-Skjern and Varnaes.

The series is full of popular humour and drama featuring a large and colourful gallery of memorable, lovable and not least sharply delineated characters. It features some of the greatest and best Danish actors of that time: Joergen Buckhoej, Ghita Noerby, Holger Juul Hansen, Ove Sprogøe, Helle Virkner, Malene Schwartz, Jesper Langberg, Kirsten Olesen, Bent Mejding and so on...

Tradition and progress

In Copenhagen, the Social Democrats headed by Thorvald Stauning have just succeeded the Liberal Party in government. In Korsbaek, Mads Andersen-Skjern upsets the social appellation by opening a clothes shop for ordinary people. In this way he challenges the prominent citizens, the rich old families, the social standards and the hierarchic social order that have characterised Korsbaek for centuries.

Later on, the Second World War and the German occupation of Denmark create new enemies and allies. And in the end, Mads Andersen-Skjern is challenged by his son, Daniel, who is homosexual and does not intend to follow in the footsteps of his strict father.

Comedy and satire

Erik Balling was one of the most prominent film directors in Denmark. He portrays the Danish mentality with great ingenuity, his preferred genres being comedy and satire. Balling was also capable of being sharp, for instance in the very popular Olsen Gang (Olsen-Banden) films, which are about the little man's fight against the prevailing social system, with its bigotry and arrogance.

Although Matador was made for television, the series was produced like a feature film, with full visual expression. The series is also one of the few Balling film projects in which the director successfully creates pure drama and realism.

LINKS

Matador-online:

www.dr.dk/bonanza/serie/drama/matador.htm?AssetId=43062

FACTS

Work:
Matador, 1978-82

Instructor:
Erik Balling (1924-2005)

Duration:
Tv-series with 24 episodes

TREE OF KNOWLEDGE

GENUINENESS

By Christian Monggaard, film reviewer and critic for the daily newspaper Information.

Do you remember the first time you fell in love? Your first kiss?

Nils Malmros remembers and this is the subject of his dramatic and humorous film, Tree of Knowledge. The episodic film is based on his own school days in Aarhus in the 1950s. And the picture of the period, the dialogue and the children's performances are surprisingly genuine, showing sympathetic insight.

The film follows the pupils of a school class over two years, when they are 14 to 16 years old. We see them at school parties and camps and learn how the natural, social hierarchy in the class works. It is often funny, but also painful.

Unspoken drama

Elin is very mature. This makes her attractive to the boys and vulnerable to insults and jealousy. Bullying ruins her school days. The other pupils whisper behind her back, she is called names and frozen out. Cliques are formed, intrigues are hatched, and an unspoken drama forgotten by many adults unfolds among the children. Often the children hurt each other unknowingly. It is not until the end of the film - when the children are well on their way to adulthood - that they realise what in fact happened and how they treated Elin.

The film was shot over two years and the actual physical and mental development of the actors is thus reflected in the development of the characters on the screen.

Straightforward and harsh

Tree of Knowledge came after Nils Malmros's first two highly praised films about schoolchildren, Lars Ole, Class 5c (Lars Ole 5c) and Boys (Drenge). Nils Malmros is working on a successor to Tree of Knowledge. Due for release in 2009, the new film follows the same characters during upper secondary school. The title will be Love Trouble (Kaerestesorger). Tree of Knowledge can be seen by older children and adolescents but some of the scenes are shockingly straightforward and harsh.

Nils Malmros primarily makes films about children, not for children. But he identifies himself with the children and enters into their special world. So it is not hard to recognise yourself in some of his characters.

LINKS

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www.kulturkanon.emu.dk/default.asp?ID=20033

Officiel hjemmeside for filmen:

www.kundskabenstrae.dk/

Det Danske Filminstitut:

www.dfi.dk/faktaofilm/nationalfilmografien/nffilm.aspx?id=170

FACTS

Work:

Tree of Knowledge (Kundskabens træ), 1981

Instructor:

Nils Malmros (born 1944)

Duration:

110 min.

BABETTE'S FEAST

GOD AND ABSTINENCE

By Christian Monggaard, film reviewer and critic for the daily newspaper Information.

French Babette was once a celebrated chef at a fine restaurant in Paris. Now she serves as maid for two pious old spinsters on the west coast of Jutland where no one knows her past.

The two ageing Misses, Martine and Filippa, keep together a steadily decreasing flock of pious Christians, gathered by their father, the priest, many years ago. Both women carry the memories of the great love that was sacrificed in favour of God and a life of abstinence.

The power of art and love

Babette wins some money in the lottery and uses all of it on preparing a succulent French dinner for the small, evangelical community. The good food and wine make them all remember that it is possible to enjoy life - and love - and worship God at the same time. Early in the film we are told that Babette has lost everything. But her sunny disposition is in sharp contrast to the self-righteous renunciation of the community of Western Jutland.

Babette's Feast is based on a story by Karen Blixen, who became known all over the world under the pseudonym of Isak Dinesen. The film depicts Babette as a passionate artist in her own field - cooking. Such a true artist has enough strength to change people's lives.

A hit abroad

The film manages to keep a discrete ironic distance from the pious residents of the west coast environment of the 1870s. The thrifty, timid members of the community gulp down the exotic courses, terrified that they are about to participate in a witches' sabbath.

The film director, Gabriel Axel, was born in Denmark where he directed several films in the 1950s, 60s and 70s. He went to live in France, where is married to a Frenchwoman and has lived and worked for many years. This means that the film could also be autobiographical to some extent. Babette's Feast was a great hit, especially abroad, winning an Oscar for Best Foreign Film in 1988.

LINKS

Det Danske Filminstitut:

www.dfi.dk/faktaomfilm/nationalfilmografien/nffilm.aspx?id=12

FACTS

Work:

Babette's Feast (Babettes gaestebud), 1987

Instructor:

Gabriel Axel (born 1918)

Duration:

103 min.

PELLE THE CONQUEROR

RAISINS IN THE ROAST PORK

By Christian Monggaard, film reviewer and critic for the daily newspaper Information.

Out of the fog they come, Pelle and his father Lasse. On board a boat packed with poor Swedish immigrants who sail to Denmark hoping to find a job. This is the beginning of Bille August's harsh yet poetic period drama Pelle the Conqueror that takes place around the year 1900. The film is based on the first part of a contemporary novel by Martin Andersen Nexoe.

In Denmark they eat raisins with their roast pork and slivers of meat on every slice of bread, father Lasse (played by the leading Swedish actor Max von Sydow) promises his boy. Children don't have to work in the daytime, but can play as much as they want to. It all sounds like heaven on earth, thinks Pelle (played by 11-year-old Pelle Hvenegaard, who is actually named after Pelle the Conqueror).

Humbleness

In real life though the two end up as herdsmen at the horrible Stone Farm where a sadistic master and his apprentice treat workers like slaves. Only Big Erik has the nerve to stand up to them. He wants to travel around the world and promises to take Pelle with him. In two years' time, when the snow melts. But a confrontation with the master builds up and it is extremely doubtful whether Erik will be able to keep his promise.

All around him, Pelle sees the socially weak being oppressed, an experience he himself shares with them. His beloved father Lasse is humble and lets Pelle down and it begins to dawn on the boy that not everyone can be strong in this life and he realises that he must get away in order not to become part of the unfair system.

Father and son

The book by Martin Andersen Nexoe, who became a communist later on, is a sharp social criticism and a tribute to the struggling proletariat. August tells a more personal story about an oppressed person who has to escape in order to survive. At the same time the film is a warm story about the love between father and son.

The film Pelle the Conqueror won the Palme d'or at the film festival in Cannes in 1988 and the following year an Oscar for Best Foreign Film, launching Danish film director Bille August's international career.

LINKS

Det Danske Filminstitut

FACTS

Work:
Pelle the Conqueror (Pelle erobreren),
1987

Instructor:
Bille August (born 1948)

Duration:
156 min.

THE CELEBRATION

COURAGE

By Christian Monggaard, film reviewer and critic for the daily newspaper Information.

At his father's 60th birthday party, son Christian gets up and delivers a shocking speech. He reveals that he and his twin sister - who recently took her own life - were abused by their father as children.

Can this be true?

To begin with the guests simply don't believe Christian. They are dismissive and try to make him apologise for his behaviour. But doubt begins to gnaw and soon the celebration gets out of hand. The final proof that Christian is speaking the truth is provided by the dead sister. She left a farewell letter, which is found during the celebration and read out aloud to all the guests.

Dogma freedom

Many people laughed when Lars von Trier and Thomas Vinterberg in 1995 launched Dogme 95 (Dogma 95). It seemed comic that dogma directors were forced to comply with 10 strict, almost primitive rules: hand-held camera, no artificial light, shooting on location and so on. (See also presentation of Lars von Trier's film *The Idiots* (Idioterne). But the critics soon stopped laughing when results began to show and *The Celebration* won a special prize at the Cannes Film Festival in 1998.

According to Thomas Vinterberg, the script for *The Celebration*, which was written along with Mogens Rukov, more or less wrote itself and the application of the dogma rules to the making of the film acted in no way as a constraint, quite the contrary. Von Trier's dogma rules allow the actors to move freely, with the camera following them, ever curious and seeking. The mobility and closeness of the camera is precisely what places the audience in the middle of the action. We become part of the drama.

Golden age of Danish film

The Celebration abounds in scathing satire and exciting drama. The film is key to the success that Danish film has experienced nationally and internationally since the mid-1990s. And Thomas Vinterberg ranks among the best of young Danish film-makers intent on telling a good story about their own generation to their own contemporaries.

The Celebration became one of the most successful dogma films abroad. It has been set up as a play all over the world, most recently in New York on Broadway. Dogma 95 helped to pave the way for the democratisation of production technology in film-making, brought about by the use of digital cameras.

LINKS

[Det Danske Filminstitut](#)

[Lyt til radiomontagen "Efter festen".](#)

[Wikipedia om Dogme95](#)

FACTS

Work:
The Celebration (Festen), 1998

Instructor:
Thomas Vinterberg (born 1969)

Duration:
106 min.

Literature

- 056** Memory of Woe
- 057** The Idiots
- 058** The Pastor of Vejlbye
- 059** The Little Mermaid
- 060** Either/Or
- 061** Mrs Marie Grubbe
- 062** Katinka
- 063** Lucky Per
- 064** The Fall of the King
- 065** Winter's Tales
- 066** And Other Stories
- 067** Butterfly Valley
- 068** Poetry anthology

MEMORY OF WOE

LONDON, SUMMER OF 1663

By Dorthe Sondrup Andersen

The King's daughter, Leonora Christina, is reading a letter from her husband. Part of the letter is made up of numbers, but it does not look like a calculation. The letter is written in code, and even the words in the letter sound like encrypted messages. Afterwards Leonora Christina goes to the lavatory where she tears the letter into tiny pieces and lets them fall into the latrine.

Attempted escape

Leonora Christina has been detained by the English authorities and has decided to escape. She has hidden a couple of handfuls of gemstones in her wig, she has sown gold coins into the hem of her slip, and there are more in her silk stockings. A diamond jewel is hidden in the lining of her silk jacket and sapphires are rolling around in her shoes. Unfortunately, the escape turns out to be a set-up. The Danish princess runs straight into the arms of the police who stop her rather convincingly by pointing their pistols and swords at her heart. Leonora Christina is taken on board a ship bound for Denmark. She bites a large diamond off her gold ring and keeps it in her mouth. She discretely disposes of the ring when she sets foot on Danish soil. It is 9 o'clock on the 8th of August 1663, and she is under arrest.

Letter to the children

Leonora Christina is not the main character in a crime story. She is not even a crime writer. She is what she is: the daughter of King Christian IV who had the misfortune to be married to a man who was later convicted of treason. The reason why her long letter to her children is now considered a brilliant piece of Danish literature is simply that her description of her escape, capture, abduction, interrogation and body search is very exciting reading. That is also true of the record of her imprisonment in the Blue Tower for the next 21 years, 9 months and 11 days, but for a completely different reason: In *Memory of Woe* Leonora Christina also describes how to behave royally among gaolers, spies, prison chaplains and fellow prisoners.

Dorthe Sondrup Andersen is a Master of Arts of Comparative Literature and an author and writer on cultural affairs. Her books include "The Golden Age without the Gilt" ("Guldalder uden forgyldning") (People's Press, 2004).

MORE INFO

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Arkiv for dansk litteratur om Jammers minde:

www.adl.dk/adl_pub/vaerker/cv/e_vaerk/e_vaerk.xsql?ff_id=36&id=7009&hist=fm&nnoc=adl_pub

BOOKS:

Bodil Wamberg: *Leonora Christina: dronning af Blåtårn*, Aschehoug, 2005.

FACTS

Work:

Memory of Woe, written 1673-74, published 1869

Artist:

Leonora Christina (1621-98)

THE IDIOTS

TRUTHFUL SCENES

By Christian Monggaard, film reviewer and critic for the daily newspaper Information.

The purpose of Dogma 95 (Dogme 95) was to set up a strict set of rules to replace the extensive technical apparatus of traditional film-making. It was all about recovering the joy of making films and capturing the truth in scenes using simple means and pure acting. Lars von Trier's Dogma 95 concept was mainly inspired by the French new wave of the 1960s. And The Idiots, Lars von Trier's own dogma film, was the one among the first four such films that most clearly depicted what he had in mind.

The film is about a group of young, well-educated people who have opted out of society for a while. Under the leadership of the idealist Stoffer (idealists are common, but problematic in Lars von Trier's films) they challenge society's established order and social standards.

They practise idiocy and later go out into the "real" world to show off their skills.

The inner idiot

The Idiots is funny in a subtle and ironic way but also emotional and moving. Not least when the idiots meet a slightly naive woman, Karen, who is the diametrical opposite of Stoffer and fails completely to understand why they act as they do.

She questions their motivation for finding their inner idiot. But in fact it turns out that Karen's need to act like an idiot and rebel against the expectations and demands of her surroundings is bigger than theirs.

Actors contribute to the process

The film is a typical example of Lars von Trier's desire to challenge by pushing things to extremes. In his journal from the shooting of the film von Trier describes how he tried to make the process as unrestrained and collective as possible. The actors were to contribute to the story. But it became painful for him and some of the actors - just as the dream of performing idiocy becomes painful in the film.

The Idiots divided audiences. Throughout his entire career, which started with The Element of Crime (Forbrydelsens element) in 1984, Lars von Trier has managed to innovate, to push the limits of the possible and please and repel people simultaneously. In Denmark as well as abroad von Trier is regarded as the most respected and influential Danish film director since Carl Th. Dreyer.

LINKS

Det Danske Filminstitut:

www.dfi.dk/faktaofilm/nationalfilmografien/nffilm.aspx?id=23221

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www.zentropa.dk/

Carsten Overskov: Leonoras latter, Branner og Korch, 2004.

FACTS

Work:

The Idiots (Idioterne), 1998

Instructor:

Lars von Trier (born 1956)

Duration:

117 min.

THE PASTOR OF VEJLBYE

A VERY NASTY STORY INDEED

By Dorthe Sondrup Andersen

A person is murdered, the murderer is convicted, the death sentence is carried out, end of story. But the story doesn't end there.

The convicted man's daughter and her sweetheart will never see each other again, and the prime witness of what is in fact a miscarriage of justice works abroad and doesn't know anything about what has happened. The real murderer dies peacefully of old age, but is the cause of more deaths many years after his crime. For when the case is unravelled, two people are unable to bear it: the two who at the time didn't have the slightest idea that they had just been useful idiots in the nasty plan of a cynical man.

Creeping uneasiness

Steen Steensen Blicher's old crime story *The Pastor of Vejlbjye* has not lost its thriller qualities thanks to both his narrative style and his insight into the human psyche. Even if he uses strong words such as 'terror' and 'abhorrence', the short story is completely devoid of words designed to whip up the already heavy atmosphere of terror and abhorrence to new dramatic heights. This creates the creepy uneasiness of the story with Steen Steensen Blicher striking the reader's emotional chords.

We all know the fear

The thought of losing the one we love because of a misunderstanding or being convicted on circumstantial evidence for something we didn't do is enough to send shivers down our spines. Blicher taps even further into the reader's fears by playing on the terror of what is hidden deep down in our own hearts. What if we really are guilty of the crime we thought was just a horrible nightmare? Or if we confess to a murder we didn't commit just because earlier we did something crazy under pressure and then repressed it?

Dorthe Sondrup Andersen is a Master of Arts of Comparative Literature and an author and writer on cultural affairs. Her books include "The Golden Age without the Gilt" ("Guldalder uden forgyldning") (People's Press, 2004).

MORE INFO

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www.adl.dk/adl_pub/fportraet/cv/ShowFpItem.aspx?ff_id=40&p_fpkat_id=incl&nnoc=adl_pub

FACTS

Work:

The Pastor of Vejlbjye, 1829

Artist:

Steen Steensen Blicher (1782-1848)

BOOKS

Henrik Ljungberg: *Dødens fortællere: om Blichers bedste noveller*, Gyldendal, 1989.

Søren Baggesen: *Fire veje til Blichers novellekunst*, Syddansk Universitetsforlag, 2004.

Knud Sørensen: *St. St. Blicher: digter og samfundsborger: en illustreret biografi*, Gyldendal, 1998.

THE LITTLE MERMAID

I'VE HEARD THAT STORY BEFORE!

By Dorthe Sondrup Andersen

It is Hans Christian Andersen's great misfortune that parents use his fairy tales as bedtime reading for their children. He deserves better, and hence there are good reasons to read *The Little Mermaid*, for example.

A perfect gem

Although almost everybody knows the story, attention is rarely paid to the way in which Hans Christian Andersen tells his fairy tales, and that is a pity. The story of *The Little Mermaid* gets off to a slow start. First we have to go far out in the blue ocean and then deep into the crystal clear water where no anchor chain can reach. Here we find a coral castle, its windows of the clearest amber and its roof formed of shells. They open and close as the water flows over them and in each lies a glittering pearl. This is the castle of the Sea King, and here live six little sea-princesses with the most beautiful fishtails. The youngest sister is the prettiest of them all; her skin as clear and delicate as a rose leaf and her eyes as blue as the deepest sea. But she is an outsider musing and longing for something she cannot put into words.

Dream prince

All children know that feeling, but a grown-up reader would more likely be struck by the unhappy love story. The beautiful ocean princess loves a prince of the land and to win his love she undergoes a painful metamorphosis to become a human being. The princess carefully steps ashore on her two new legs, but the prince is not the least bit attracted to her. He cares for her, he even amicably gives her a nickname and brazenly discusses his love affairs with her.

However, when the prince dresses her in men's clothes, we should pay attention, for is the fairy tale really about the relationship between two men? One who is attracted to women, and one who is more attracted to other men? In short, the story of a young homosexual man who falls head over heels in love with his heterosexual friend. If that is the case it is no surprise that the girl in men's clothes cannot speak, suffers a world of agonies and does not get the one she loves.

Dorthe Sondrup Andersen is a Master of Arts of Comparative Literature and an author and writer on cultural affairs. Her books include "The Golden Age without the Gilt" ("Guldalder uden forgyldning") (People's Press, 2004).

MORE INFO

H.C. Andersen – Wikipedia:

www.da.wikipedia.org/wiki/H.C._Andersen

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FACTS

Work:

The Little Mermaid, 1837

Artist:

H.C. Andersen (1805-1875)

BOOKS

Finn Barlby(red.): *Det flydende spejl: analyser af H.C. Andersens "Den lille havfrue"*, Dråben, 1995.

EITHER/OR

UNSUITABLE FOR CHILDREN

By *Dorthe Sondrup Andersen*

A young man by the name of Soeren Kierkegaard hurries down the main street in central Copenhagen with an indispensable umbrella tucked under his arm. He has a handsome face, but he is visibly disabled. His back is crooked, and the length of his legs so unequal that he has to make an effort not to walk round in circles. Not an exceptional scene because many both cripples and geniuses existed in Copenhagen at the gold age, but this guy was indeed quite special.

Historical one-night stand

The works of Soeren Kierkegaard are hardcore philosophy dressed up as literature. This is also true of his first literary work, *Either/Or*, which he published under a different name. The content was supposed to be a ream of documents found in a secret compartment of an old bureau. Half of it is written by a man that the publisher calls A. The rest are letters sent to him from someone who, by the same token, is simply called B. They are two very different men. A thinks of nothing but enjoying life to the full, whereas B thinks a lot about how a responsible person should live. Much of the book makes for awfully dry reading. Soeren Kierkegaard probably chose this style deliberately, for what really makes *Either/Or* work, is a very naughty story about how one of the men seduces a young girl, only to dump her the next day in order to hurry on to new seductions.

Guide to picking up girls and existential masterpiece

Either/Or caused quite a scandal when it was published. The chapter called *The Seducer's Diary* (*Forfoererens Dagbog*) seemed downright pornographic at the time. Even so, it didn't take people long to guess the identity of the real writer, because Soeren Kierkegaard himself had done something similar, i.e. become engaged to a young girl and then left her shortly after. As if that wasn't bad enough, he now added insult to injury by revealing the most intimate details of that nasty story in print.

Soeren Kierkegaard's first book does not seem to be pornography today, but that doesn't mean his seduction technique no longer works. Male readers can still learn a trick or two about sweet-talking a girl into bed. Female readers can test Soeren Kierkegaard's tactics on themselves. And blush at the thought that the little weakling of a book nerd might not have been such a bad lover.

Dorthe Sondrup Andersen is a Master of Arts of Comparative Literature and an author and writer on cultural affairs. Her books include "The Golden Age without the Gilt" ("Guldalder uden forgyldning") (People's Press, 2004).

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www.adl.dk/adl_pub/forfatter/e_forfatter/e_forfatter.xsql?nnoc=adl_pub&ff_id=75

Kierkegaard Forskningscentret: www.sk.ku.dk/

FACTS

Work:
Either/Or, 1843

Artist:
 Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855)

BOOKS

Joachim Garff: *SAK: Søren Aabye Kierkegaard: en biografi*, Gyldendal, 2005.

Peter Tudvad: *Kierkegaards København*, Politiken, 2005.

MRS MARIE GRUBBE

NAKED SKIN, SILK AND STEEL

By Dorthe Sondrup Andersen

On a summer's day in the middle of the seventeenth century, the writer I. P. Jacobsen arrives at Tjele Manor. Not as himself, but as the scent of flowers flowing in through the slightly parted lips of noblewoman Marie Grubbe, filling her tender breast and bringing oxygen to her brain. Perhaps that is something the writer should not have done, for erotic fantasies abound in there that are in stark contrast to the 14-year-old girl's childish appearance and bright summery surroundings.

Fatal attraction

Marie Grubbe is sent to Copenhagen just before the Swedish king places an iron ring around the city, and she falls helplessly in love with the city's military commander-in-chief. Marie is even excited by the fact that the gallant officer uses a bit of force to get his first kiss. Unfortunately the war hero dies under circumstances that cause Marie to despise him, and consequently she quite happily marries the King's protégé, Ulrik Frederik Gyldenløve. The marriage begins gently and pleasantly enough, but when, after a long stay abroad, Ulrik Frederik gets a bit heavy-handed with her in an erotic situation, Marie grabs a dagger and stabs him. No wonder Ulrik Frederik subsequently prefers to keep his distance, but this just causes her to attack upon his mistress.

From spark to bonfire

Her marriage is just a detail in Marie's life. Both before, during and after, men are attracted to her like moths to the light of a kerosene lamp. Some die from it, others get burnt, and the lucky ones use the same tactics as Ulrik Frederik Gyldenløve and keep a certain safe distance. Even though to some extent the novel Mrs. Marie Grubbe is based on a true story, it would be a shame to reveal how it ends. Suffice it to say that a very young man's very resolute actions during a violent fire at Tjele Manor leave an indelible impression on Marie. And on the reader for that matter.

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J.P. Jacobsen på e-poke.dk:

www.e-poke.dk/jacobsen.asp

FACTS

Work:

Mrs Marie Grubbe, 1876

Artist:

J.P. Jacobsen (1847-1885)

BOOKS

Jørn Erslev Andersen: J. P. Jacobsen. Lyrik og prosa - med tekstudgivelse og efterskrift. 1993.

Mogens Paahus: J.P. Jacobsens forfatterskab: en eksistentiel fortolkning, Systime, 1986.

KATINKA

SMALL-TOWN IDYLL AND HELL

By Dorthe Sondrup Andersen

Herman Bang tells us how he was struck by the idea for his novella *Katinka* during a train ride in Northern Jutland. When the train made a brief stop at a small station, he caught sight of a green window in the stationmaster's house. It was filled with flowering potted plants and above those he saw a woman's face. Herman Bang couldn't forget the face and especially its expression, and thus he tried to guess, in literary form, what events had caused that expression.

A barren marriage

Herman Bang calls the woman *Katinka* and at the beginning of the novella, she has been married to stationmaster Bai for ten years. In a way she is happy and contented, but she is sexually inhibited. Whereas Mr Bai, a former lieutenant, looks quite handsome as he struts around the platform wearing his uniform, it makes Mrs Bai uncomfortable when at bedtime he pads about in his underwear right before her eyes instead of going to bed. No wonder the marriage is childless and the stationmaster ends up with sex on the brain.

Sparkling wit

Before finishing his novella, Herman Bang has exposed just about all the inhabitants of the small railway town. It is extremely funny because he is unable to repress his laughter when describing what they look like, and how they act and talk. For example, the clergyman's daughter Agnes Linde, who gesticulates so wildly when speaking that it looks like she is boxing people's ears. Herman Bang describes the clergyman's daughter, who is as tall as a guardsman, as "swinging her arms" and says that it looks like a violent assault when she throws them around someone she loves.

Anything but a happy ending

However, the Bais are the main characters of the novella, and they drift apart when an agronomist by the name of Huus comes to town. The sequence of events that follows makes it difficult even for Herman Bang to keep laughing. Let me put it this way: it all comes to a bad end -a very bad end.

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Herman Bang:
www.e-poke.dk/bang.asp

FACTS

Work:
Katinka from *Quiet Lives*, 1886

Artist:
 Herman Bang (1857-1912)

BOOKS

Dag Heede: Herman Bang - mærkværdige læsninger: toogfirs tableauer, Syddansk Universitetsforlag, 2003.

Vivian Greene-Gantzberg: Herman Bang og det fremmede, Gyldendal, 1992.

Ulrich Breuning (red.): Ved vejen: en roman filmatiseres, Gyldendal, 1988.

LUCKY PER

YES!

By Dorthe Sondrup Andersen

Novels are about many things, but almost always they are also about love, and this is certainly true of Henrik Pontoppidan's *Lucky Per*. The principal character, Per, is the type who quickly puts his childhood, family and provincial home town behind him, because he thinks he has the potential to conquer the world. When he leaves home, all he takes with him is a great big engineering project that is going to transform Denmark once and for all from a sleepy peasant country into a fine-tuned industrial machine.

Good-looking country boy

Women don't hold much interest for him, however. Except if they stand in the way of his project or if they may be able to promote it, and in that case by how many million. In a way this becomes Per's destiny, for he is very good-looking. The girl in the window across the street blushes, the maid cuddles his pillow and a merchant's wife yanks down the V of her dress. But it is only when two sisters from a wealthy Jewish family start fighting over him that the erotic game really begins. For example, the following sentence portends the younger sister's attack: "Catching sight of Per she stopped and with calculating slowness let her white fur cape slip down to expose her shoulders".

War and love

Strictly speaking both sisters find Per both boorish, embarrassing and his clothes anything but elegant, but when after a strenuous run he stands sweat-drenched in front of the elder sister, she falls for him so hard that it echoes through Copenhagen. This means war! Per is both fascinated and repelled and the same goes for the two sisters who also do what they can to attract and reject other men in their mutual power game.

It takes Henrik Pontoppidan more than 600 pages to decide which girl is to take Per home as her prize, but Per is as stubborn as a mule and wants to make up his own mind. Whether this is good or bad is for the reader to decide.

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Website about Pontoppidan:
www.henrikpontoppidan.dk/

FACTS

Work:
Lucky Per, 1898-1904

Artist:
 Henrik Pontoppidan (1857-1943)

BOOKS

Knut Ahnlund: *Omkring Lykke-Per*, Hans Reitzel, 1971.

Jørgen Holmgaard: *Dødens gilding: en analyse af Henrik Pontoppidans Lykke-Per*, Munksgaard, 1971.

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THE FALL OF THE KING

THE REALM IS IN WANT OF HEROES

By dorthe Sondrup Andersen

If you mark the so-called Danish values to which Johannes V. Jensen pays tribute in his writing, the marks would not be that great. That said, *The Fall of the King* is probably the best novel ever written in Danish. And surely the fact that Johannes V. Jensen was awarded the Nobel prize for literature is an indication that he is right up there in the international Formula 1 group.

Triumph of Death

In a way it is strange, for the principal character of the novel, the mercenary foot soldier Mikkel Thoegersen is an unusually unpleasant person. However, in this respect he is no different from his employer, King Christian II, himself a veritable butcher, or from the King's opponents, the noblemen, who behave like berserker killing machines. Even peaceable peasants and townsmen run amok in an ecstasy of blood when the nobility deposes the King and locks him up at Soenderborg Castle. Of course there are good, loving and caring people in the novel, but to no avail - they all die anyway.

Linguistic storm

Johannes V. Jensen deserves ten out of ten for *The Fall of the King*, mainly for its pace and highly evocative language. For example, when lightning strikes it is followed by a crash that sounds like the crack of a canon, the rattling of falling stones and hollow thunder. A burning manor house is depicted through a gigantic rotating wheel of smoke high in the sky above. The King's power politics include a plan for Danish cannon balls to ram the cliffs of Dover and for the heads of Swedish opponents to jump from the chopping block spraying long trails of blood. This is no surprise, for when a drunken Christian II hurls his pewter tankard against the wall, it falls to the floor completely flattened. If people have been drinking, they walk like ships beating up against the wind, and booze is only deadly dangerous when they see white mice the size of a castle gate.

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FACTS

Work:

The Fall of the King (Kongens fald), 1900-01

Artist:

Johannes V. Jensen (1873-1950)

BOOKS

Poul Bager: *Kongens fald: en analyse af Johannes V. Jensens roman*, Centrum, 1988.

Stefan Iversen(red.): *Kraftlinjer: om Johannes V. Jensens forfatterskab*, Syddansk Universitetsforlag, 2004.

Lars Handesten: *Johannes V. Jensen: liv og værk*, Gyldendal, 2000.

WINTER'S TALES

TALES FOR LONG WINTER'S EVENINGS

By Dorthe Sondrup Andersen

It only takes a few minutes' reading to realize that the stories in Karen Blixen's *Winter's Tales* are not about real life. But then the title of the book already says as much.

What happens in the stories is wildly improbable, and Karen Blixen never lets the reader forget that she is the narrator, she chooses the style, and she alone decides what is to be included or not. She even goes as far as to say that the heroine's story should really have been written in verse instead of in prose.

Playing with words

So it doesn't take much of a leap of imagination when Karen Blixen insists that in a way her stories are also plays. They may be tragedies or comedies, but what they have in common is an invented reality, an illusion created by actors, curtains and backdrops, a sloping stage floor, setpieces, props, sound and light machines.

Karen Blixen continues her reflections by saying that the scenes in a play can also be regarded as a row of pictures. She clearly plays on this when describing characters, events, landscapes and interiors as if they were symbols in a coat-of-arms, paintings in a museum or illustrations in a book. Whatever her emphasis, Karen Blixen's point seems to be that like a sorceress she can transform letters, words and writing into something that could have happened.

Farmer and big-game hunter

Fortunately, it is a matter of taste whether you are fascinated by baroness Blixen's literary riddles or prefer the tough woman whose writings about Africa made the lions roar and lovers fall out of the sky. One thing, however, is certain: she is a master storyteller. That is a view shared by many across the globe...

Dorthe Sondrup Andersen is a Master of Arts of Comparative Literature and an author and writer on cultural affairs. Her books include "The Golden Age without the Gilt" ("Guldalder uden forgyldning") (People's Press, 2004).

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www.karen-blixen.dk/

FACTS

Work:

Winter's Tales, 1942

Artist:

Karen Blixen (1885-1962)

BOOKS

Steen Eiler Rasmussen: *Karen Blixens Rungstedlund: en billedbog*, Gyldendal, 2001.

Else Brundbjerg: *Samtaler med Karen Blixen*, Gyldendal, 2000.

AND OTHER STORIES

RYF!

By Dorthe Søndrup Andersen

It's easy to get an overdose of aesthetics, fiction and good manners. Perhaps that was what made Klaus Rifbjerg write his collection of short stories called *And Other Stories* more than forty years ago. Here he takes the mickey out of almost everything and everyone, and even today some readers will think that Klaus Rifbjerg has an unusually dirty mind and a similarly foul mouth. But the fact of the matter is that hardly any other contemporary Danish authors write better literature.

Rinse, please!

Rifbjerg's short stories may be about the most disgusting subjects, and the air is filled with snot and sperm, tits and farts, crap and puke, but his unusual talent as a stylist is immediately recognisable. For example, to stick to the vomit, in the story *Fear?* (Angst?) he lets a young man puke "like a bubbling clogged-up drain where the waste, the filth, the world's end of discarded humanity has piled up and is finally becoming unclogged".

New outlook

As a reader one is fascinated, despite the sickening content of the short stories, for there are also truly wonderful passages that give you a whole new outlook on life. Perhaps a cottage in the dunes where the blankets being aired are seen as tongues flopping out of all the windows, or a father and a mother being observed from knee height by their little son. For example the father, very erect on his bicycle, using his legs like pistons and so tall that the leaves of the roadside trees brush against his head. An image that is contrasted with an adolescent boy's difficulties with the bicycle rack at the public baths and an elderly Frenchman whose bicycle, besides being "strangely squat", is also equipped with a saddle, that "had to be cutting its way slowly into the lower edge of his buttocks".

Incidentally, it must have been the first time in Danish history that the expression 'fuck you!' appeared in print in a book. Today it is part of the vocabulary of just about everyone and his dog, but in 1964 it was pretty strong stuff.

Dorthe Søndrup Andersen is a Master of Arts of Comparative Literature and an author and writer on cultural affairs. Her books include "The Golden Age without the Gilt" ("Guldalder uden forgyldning") (People's Press, 2004).

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Work:

And Other Stories, 1964

Artist:

Klaus Rifbjerg (f. 1931)

BOOKS

Jakob og Janus Kramhøft (red.):

Kærligheden er alt: et portræt af Klaus Rifbjerg. Tiderne Skifter, 2003.

Lars Gustaf Andersson og Per Svenson (red.): *Rifbjergs naturaliekabinet eller Herlighedsværdien: en studie i tolv noveller*. Gyldendal, 2002.

BUTTERFLY VALLEY

ALL RIGHT?!

By Dorthe Sondrup Andersen

There are two ways to approach a collection of poems such as Inger Christensen's *Butterfly Valley*. You can either arm yourself to the teeth and attack it with a dictionary of foreign words and an atlas, a couple of textbooks on physics and chemistry and some reference books on flora and fauna, Greco-Roman mythology and literary genres. Or you can choose to lay down your arms and defencelessly enter the poet's universe. If you do, strange things will happen.

With bridal veil and silver-washed fritillary

It would have been a good deal easier if Inger Christensen had written poems about flowers that we all know such as roses, tulips and violets. Instead she uses plant names such as wallflower, stock and bridal veil. The advantage of not really knowing what these plants look like is that the words seem to separate themselves from the plants they refer to. For example, a bridal veil is also the veil worn by the bride on her wedding day, and this makes it easier to connect the word with butterfly names such as *Camberwell beauty* and *silver-washed fritillary*. Exactly the same thing happens with the names of colours and minerals when instead of bright red and rust brown Inger Christensen uses words like *vermilion* and *ochre*.

Death has you in its sights

There are no definitive guides to understanding poetry, but if you lower your guard then the magpie moth will truly delude your senses with death's head hawk-moths and emperor moths floating in the air. It will also be easier to understand that a bay of tears is not necessarily a geographical location. Maybe we are not supposed to know where the *Brajcino Valley* is, as long as we know that it is the place where even the heaviest objects rise into the air as weightlessly as stray thoughts on a hot summer's day.

But it will take several readings of the poems to make the little hairs at the nape of your neck to stand up. Isn't it true that two very important things change places as you read? At first, the poet looked death straight in the eye, but in the end it sounds like Death itself suddenly has her in its sights.

Dorthe Sondrup Andersen is a Master of Arts of Comparative Literature and an author and writer on cultural affairs. Her books include "The Golden Age without the Gilt" ("Guldalder uden forgyldning") (People's Press, 2004).

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Litteratursiden.dk om Inger Christensen:
www.litteratursiden.dk/analyser/christensen-inger-det

FACTS

Work:
Butterfly Valley, 1991

Artist:
 Inger Christensen (f. 1935)

BOOKS/FILM

Lis Wedell Pape (red.):
 Sprogskygger: læsninger i Inger Christensens forfatterskab, Århus Universitetsforlag, 1995.

Jytte Rex: Inger Christensen - cikaderne findes: en portrætfilm, Kollektiv Film, 1998.

POETRY ANTHOLOGY

FROM GORM THE OLD TO YESTERDAY

By *Dorthe Sondrup Andersen*

Players and fans alike - they all sing along cheerfully when the national anthem is played before an international football match. It clears the lungs and hypes up the team, but the phenomenon itself is actually a splendid illustration of the fact that poetry stands up to the ravages of time much better than many other things. The text is written by the poet of the golden age, Adam Oehlenschläger.

A song for every season...

In fact you almost have to stuff your ears with cotton wool if you don't want to listen to old Danish poetry. "Welcome here, new year of grace" (Vær velkommen, Herrens år) blasts from every television and radio set just after midnight on New Year's Eve and there are special songs for Shrovetide and others for Easter. On Midsummer Eve we gather faithfully around the bonfire and join in to sing "This country we love" (Vi elsker vort land). And there's no Christmas Eve without the whole family joining hands to dance round the Christmas tree while trying to remember the words of the hymns "Bright and glorious is the sky" (Dejlig er den himmel blå) or "A babe is born in Bethlehem" (Et barn er født i Bethlehem).

...And every age

We are not just reminded that Danish poetry is alive by the changing seasons, it follows us throughout our lives. We don't mind skipping church festivals, but for family celebrations and the suchlike many a guest has tried his or her hand at writing a song for the occasion that fits the melody of "Here I stand with tinkling bells galore" (Jeg er havren, jeg har bjælder på). And for most people a wedding is not complete without "How sweetly beckons the path ahead" (Det er så yndigt at følges ad) being sung.

Here and now

Poems are never better than when sung or read aloud. This is also true of Ivan Malinowski's little poem about gnats dancing over the water level of the fjord. Even if you are sitting in front of your pc at this very moment, try to whisper these lines:

and silently pecks an invisible beak

at the mirror's film of wind and salt

soon bursts all

Dorthe Sondrup Andersen is a Master of Arts of Comparative Literature and an author and writer on cultural affairs. Her books include "The Golden Age without the Gilt" ("Guldalder uden forgyldning") (People's Press, 2004).

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Folkeviser på Kalliope: www.kalliope.org/da/ffront.cgi?fhandle=folkeviser

FACTS

List of 24 poetic works:

- 'Ebbe Skammelsøn', folkeviser
- 'Germand Gladensvend', folkeviser
- 'Hver har sin Skæbne' af Thomas Kingo.
- 'Den yndigste Rose er funden' af H.A. Brorson.
- 'Til Siælen. En Ode' af Johs. Ewald.
- 'Indvielsen' af Schack Staffeldt.
- 'Hakon Jarls Død eller Christendommens Indførsel i Norge' af Adam Oehlenschläger.
- 'De levendes Land' af N.F.S. Grundtvig.
- 'Rosa unica' af Chr. Winther.
- 'Paa Sneen' af Emil Aarestrup.
- 'Jeg hører i Natten den vuggende Lyd' af Holger Drachmann.
- 'Ekbåtana' af Sophus Claussen.
- 'Aften' af Jeppe Aakjær.
- 'Den danske Sommer' af Thøger Larsen.
- 'Det er Knud, som er død' af Tom Kristensen.
- 'Læren om staten' af Jens August Schade.
- 'det underste land' af Gustaf Munch-Petersen.
- 'Anubis' af Thorkild Bjørnvig.
- 'Regnmaaleren' af Ole Sarvig.
- 'Øjeblik' af Morten Nielsen.
- 'Sidenius i Esbjerg' af Frank Jæger.
- 'Myggesang' af Ivan Malinowski.
- 'Personen på toppen' af Per Højholt.
- 'Violinbyggernes by' af Henrik Nordbrandt.

Music

- 070** Eight Morning Songs and Seven Evening Songs
- 071** Holger the Dane
- 072** Three galops
- 073** The Elf King's Daughter
- 074** The Sibyl's Prophecy
- 075** King and Marshal
- 076** Masquerade
- 077** Symphony No. 4
- 078** Antichrist
- 079** Symphony No. 3
- 080** Symphony-Antiphony
- 081** Folk High School Songs
- 083** 12 Selected Songs
- 084** Danish Golden Age
- 085** The Savage Rose
- 086** Here You Are
- 087** Svante's Ballads
- 088** Live - Like That
- 089** Supertanker
- 090** Sign of the Times

EIGHT MORNING SONGS AND SEVEN EVENING SONGS

HITS FROM THE OLD DAYS

by Finn Gravesen

These are songs that were written over 170 years ago. And they've survived pretty well. Once they were almost what we would call hits, since then they've become evergreens. They've been on the school curriculum for generations. The characteristically subdued, tranquil and idyllic tone of these songs is seen as an expression of something we consider to be quintessentially Danish. The songs owe their existence to cooperation between Danish Bernhard Severin Ingemann, who wrote the lyrics, and Weyse, a German immigrant, who composed the tunes.

“Snail with shell, wig and gloves ...”

The songs we sing in Denmark can be really funny sometimes. Many Danish children have sung this weird line without questioning it in the least. And the great tune helps things along. It is probably only as a grown-up that one realises that the line, though sounding very similar in Danish, really reads: “Now the snail with shell on its back wants to go and take a wander” from Weyse's and Ingemann's “Now the fair little flowers come out and peek at one another” (“Nu titte til hinanden de favre blomster smaa”).

Well-known - but always unpredictable

These may not be pop songs, but Weyse knew the recipe for success: a song which sounds as if you've already known it for years. That was what his teacher J.A.P. Schulz - the man who wrote “The moon rises ever so slowly” (“Sig maanen langsomt haever”) - taught him. And Ingemann was fully aware of this too. The idea behind these little songs was that they should deal with common experiences in daily life and nature. Serenity and equilibrium. Everyday life with a touch of biblical history and middle class morality added. Written in a language using undemonstrative, simple imagery.

Words sing themselves

Weyse was of the opinion that the melodies lay concealed in the lyrics. “Such beautiful poems compose themselves ...” he said of Ingemann's song texts. Using modest effects, Weyse somehow manages to combine the straightforward with the unique. As in the start of “Now do all the bells ring towards the heavens,” (“Nu ringer alle klokker mod sky”) where you can really hear the bells chime. It is the sound of a typical Danish Sunday morning. Or when as in “The Sun rises in the East” (“I Oesten stiger solen op”), the melody of the first line follows the sun's movement up through the morning sky.

Finn Gravesen is an author and editor, his latest work being “Who owns the music?” (“Hvem ejer musikken?”) (2006) commissioned by the Ministry of Culture.

LINKS

More Weyse on Bibliotekernes Netmusik:
www.bibzoom.dk/cgi-bin/WebObjects/TShop.woa

Det Kongelige Biblioteks side om kanon for musik:
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Kort engelsk biografi på Dacapo Records:
www.dacapo-records.dk/da/artist-christoph-ernst-friedrich-weyse.aspx

B.S. Ingemann Selskabet <http://www.ingemann-selskabet.dk/v>

FACTS

Work:
Eight Morning Songs and Seven
Evening Songs, 1837, 1838

Artists:
C.E.F. Weyse (1774-1842).
Poems by B.S. Ingemann

HOLGER THE DANE

MAGIC FAIRYTALE OPERA

by *Finn Gravesen*

The whole thing begins with a single, long theme on the horns, a mystical sound, which signifies the magical force of nature. It is the magic horn of Oberon, the Elf King, endowed with the power to make people dance. Oberon and his Queen, Titania, seek redemption through a couple of human beings who love each other so much that they remain faithful to each other in the face of all temptation - even when their very lives are threatened. The couple in question are Holger (the Dane) and Rezia. The horn returns to become the decisive factor during a hefty fight when Holger's servant blows on the instrument to get everyone to dance! And in the final scene Oberon and Titania are of course united to the sound of two horns.

Anti-German feeling

Suspicion of foreigners is nothing new - neither in Denmark - and Kunzen's problem was his German origin. Kunzen's Holger the Dane opera - with libretto by Jens Baggesen - was a great success at its première at the Royal Danish Theatre in 1789 and the two young authors had naturally expected thanks and recognition for their work. But things were to be very different. Sparked by hatred for the Germans and petty jealousies, those in positions of influence came out and opposed the opera, which was in the event only performed six times. This débâcle did not however prevent the ordinary Copenhagener from liking the opera, a fact confirmed by one eyewitness who wrote: People learnt many of the pieces (from the opera) by heart straightaway ... and during the winter of 1789 you could hear these tunes - like folk songs - sung on all the streets and thoroughfares of Copenhagen as well as at guard parades."

Just like film

Magic was the height of fashion at the time - Mozart's Magic Flute was given its Copenhagen première two years later. In the case of Holger the Dane, things went so far that something approaching magic - or modern film technique, dissolving one scene into another - was required to carry out the scene changes. It was daring stuff - almost too much so!

The music survives

The quality of the music in the opera has never been contested. And many people consider Holger the Dane to be the first romantic opera ever written.

Finn Gravesen is an author and editor, his latest work being "Who owns the music?" ("Hvem ejer musikken?") (2006) commissioned by the Ministry of Culture.

Holger the Dane (Holger Danske). By Nicolai Abildgaard. Statens Museum for Kunst.

LINKS

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Baggrundsinformation om operaen på Dacapo Records:
www.dacapo-records.dk/da/index.aspx?page=newsletter&id=1716

FACTS

Work:
 Holger the Dane (Holger Danske),
 1789

Artist:
 F.L.Æ. Kunzen (1761-1817)
 Text by Jens Baggesen

Om Jens Baggesen i Arkiv for Dansk Litteratur:
www.adl.dk/adl_pub/fptraet/cv/ShowFpItem.xsql?ff_id=70&p_fpkat_id=indl&nnoc=adl_pub

THREE GALOPS

TRATERA-TRATERA-TRATERA ... POP!

by *Finn Gravesen*

Every Dane knows the opening of the Champagne Galop. A fanfare on the trumpets succeeded by the resounding POP of a champagne bottle - followed by three or four great tunes in a festive orchestral arrangement. Fun and colour! But one always gets a surprise when the champagne pop comes! Listen to it for yourself and you'll see what we mean!

Galops galore

The composer Lumbye and the Tivoli Amusement Park in Copenhagen belong together. He was the gardens' very first music director back in 1843, and his tunes were sung and whistled everywhere round town by all and sundry. Lumbye wrote a lot of music specially for the new Tivoli Gardens - at the beginning this amounted to one galop for each of the park's attractions: The Big Dipper Galop (Rutschebane-Galop), The Merry-Go-Round Galop (Carousellbane-Galop), The Tivoli Bazaar Galop (Tivoli-Bazar-Galop), The Tivoli Steam Merry-Go-Round Galop (Tivoli Damp Carousellbane-Galop) and a plethora of others. Galops were also composed later in honour of other innovations of the period - for example The Telegraph Galop and The Copenhagen Steam Railway Galop - the latter complete with the lifelike chuff-chuffing sound of a steam locomotive!

People were mad about Lumbye's melodies, which came to play a major role in Copenhagen life. His music was played everywhere - in cafés, dance halls and at concerts - as well as at home in the sitting rooms of the middle class, where it became normal to have an upright piano and tinkle Lumbye on the ivories.

Waltz - big dance craze

Lumbye's music was the height of fashion. A craze for the waltz spread all over Europe and everyone was wild about the dance form. Rarely had such abandon been experienced in the annals of music! You grasped your partner and cast aside all prudishness to indulge in the glory of the waltz. And Lumbye also wrote waltzes for some of the most famous women of his era: The Johanne Louise (Heiberg) Waltz (Johanne Louise-Vals) for the eponymous literary salon hostess, the Jenny Lind Waltz (Jenny Lind-Vals) for the famed Swedish singer and the Queen Louise Waltz (Dronning Louise-Vals) for the Danish monarch's much loved commoner wife.

In Lumbye, Copenhageners felt they had their very own orchestral conductor, a man capable of composing music "à la Strauss" - Vienna's immortal Johann Strauss, the great beau idéal.

Festivity, peace and quiet

Also the Danish king was happy about Lumbye. Revolutions were rumbling round Europe, but as long as the Danes had their Tivoli Gardens and their Lumbye, peace prevailed and there was no danger of domestic insurrection. And a few years later King Frederik VII voluntarily dropped the absolute monarchy in Denmark ...

Finn Gravesen is an author and editor, his latest work being "Who owns the music?" ("Hvem ejer musikken?") (2006) commissioned by the Ministry of Culture.

FACTS

Work:

Three galops:

Telegraph Galop

Champagne Galop

Copenhagen Steam Railway Galop

Artist:

H.C. Lumbye (1810-1874)

LINKS

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www.dacapo-records.dk/en/artist-h-c-lumbye.aspx

THE ELF KING'S DAUGHTER

SHINING HAPPINESS AND DARK PASSION

by *Finn Gravesen*

In *The Elf King's Daughter*, the young knight Oluf is to marry but the night before his nuptials he falls victim to the irresistible attraction of the elf people!

Under the pretext that he must go off and invite another guest to the festivities, Oluf makes ready to depart to the kingdom of the elves. The valedictory song in which Oluf's fair bride and the dark-haired elf girl, the cheerful wedding ambiance and the hero's schism between duty and desire, are contrasted, is one of the piece's musical climaxes. Oluf's mysterious horseback ride through a moonlit landscape is a tone painting with an orchestral movement of the highest order.

In part two, the elf girls dance while the elf king's daughter seeks to beguile Oluf in almost supernatural tones. Rejected by Oluf, she inflicts a mortal wound on him, and he flees through the woods to a dramatic orchestral accompaniment. Back at the wedding scene, Oluf perishes in front of his bride and all the guests. Here Gade ends the work with surely the most beautiful choral version ever of Ingemann's "The sun rises in the East" ("I Østen stiger solen op").

Inspired by a fraud

It was actually a hoax which brought composer Niels W. Gade's romantic creativity to the boil. As a 22-year-old, he became deeply inspired by a collection of medieval Celtic poems, which had just been published in England. Moved by these poems, Gade composed his *Ossian Overture* (*Ossian-ouverture*) for a musical competition - and won. The fact that it later turned out that the author of the poems was a cheat and a swindler, who had written the texts himself, does not, however, diminish Gade's splendid musical achievement.

Folksongs and legends

Fifteen years later, in 1854, Gade's eyes and ears were opened to the world of Danish folksongs and legends. And here again his romantic interests are very much in evidence - the occult, the mysterious and the passionate combined with light, peace of mind and joy. *The Elf King's Daughter* is a choral and orchestral work, which recounts an ancient folk tale in words and tones.

Tones creating pictures

The tone painting in Gade's orchestral music is capable of doing something like today's film music does for screen mega-dramas such as *Lord of the Rings* or *Star Wars*. When we close our eyes, we can see everything before us.

Finn Gravesen is an author and editor, his latest work being "Who owns the music?" ("Hvem ejer musikken?") (2006) commissioned by the Ministry of Culture.

LINKS

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FACTS

Work:
The Elf King's Daughter (*Elverskud*),
1854

Artist:
Niels W. Gade (1817-1890)

THE SIBYL'S PROPHECY

THE CREATION OF THE WORLD AND ITS DESTRUCTION

by *Finn Gravesen*

Following the orders of Odin, the Gods create the earth out of the sea (Minor key. Mysterious piano, sombre mood, the double basses rise from the depths). Chaos is transformed into order. The sun rises and the first human beings arrive on the scene. (Theme in all four voices. Light key). Fight between the Gods and the giants, Odin slings his javelin and general strife breaks out. (March theme and hefty chords, full blast). The mighty meet (powerful trumpets). Lies poison the air giving rise to a storm of indignation (music grows, march in deeper strings). The Twilight of the Gods, the great battle, cleanses the world (hammering, sharp chords) and the good assemble in paradise (harp chords, beautiful piano melody). The powerful come down from the heavens to make their judgement and pronounce on what is to be made sacred on earth (Quiet ending. Peace and pianissimo).

The Sibyl's prophecy

This is the vision of the creation of earth, its destruction and salvation according to the Old Norse Sibyl's Prophecy saga dating from around the year 900 AD - put to music by J.P.E. Hartmann in 1872.

A "sibyl" is a soothsayer or prophet from Old Norse times. A mysterious figure, just the sort of thing which turned on romantic souls like Hartmann. The more mysterious, the more distant the subject matter, the better. And the music followed of its own accord. The public loved these exotic stories and were utterly moved by the music's dramatic expressiveness.

Industry and choral music

1872 was the year when the Nordic Industrial Exhibition was held in Copenhagen. Inside the industrial pavilion specially built for the occasion there was a large crystal palace, which was very well-suited as a concert hall for a very large symphony orchestra, the local Danish student singers and their colleagues from across the Sound in Lund, who were invited to take part in the grand première of the exhibition. Their participation underlined the "Nordic" aspect of the project. With industry as its backbone, the exhibition expressed a definite belief in the future.

Finn Gravesen is an author and editor, his latest work being "Who owns the music?" ("Hvem ejer musikken?") (2006) commissioned by the Ministry of Culture.

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FACTS

Work:
The Sibyl's Prophecy (Voelvens spa-
adom), 1872

Artist:
J.P.E. Hartmann (1805-1900)
Text: Fr. Winkel Horn

KING AND MARSHAL

MEDIEVAL DANISH DON JUAN

by Finn Gravesen

King Erik Klipping is a bit of womaniser. He has his beautiful queen waiting for him at home, while he goes out and pursues the young charcoal burner girl Aase and he's also got his eye on Marshal Stig's faithful wife Ingeborg at the same time. To make matters worse, all this is going on at a time when the country is in the midst of a major political crisis. There couldn't be a better topic for a romantic author and composer: desire smoulders beneath the surface as revenge inflames men whose deepest feelings have been outraged. Just the sort of stuff Hollywood would have no hesitation in taking up.

The Middle Ages and folksongs

The composer Peter Heise and the librettist Christian Richardt were both in their late forties in 1878 when they completed their tense opera on the murder mystery of King Erik Klipping at Finderup Lade on November 22, 1286. The subject had everything the heart could desire as regards love, drama and vengeance. The composer wrote to the librettist that he wanted a very sensual rendering of the story, among other things Heise wanted King Erik to be portrayed as "a really passionate, irresistible, sensuous" person. And that's just what he got.

Love and drama

When Marshal Stig goes off to war to defend Denmark and the honour of the king, he asks the king to look after his spouse Ingeborg. We in the audience immediately smell a rat but here the composer restrains the audience with a minuet from the Middle Ages. Otherwise the music in the work is completely in keeping with the times, while at the same time containing references to Danish folksongs. The choir plays a major role - not least in the pompous finale, "The Song of Distress" ("Vaadesangen), about the country that is in distress, meaning without a leader. Heise was normally a composer of songs, but he shows here his ability to successfully carry off the task of writing the libretto for an opera. All the way from Aase's little songs with their folksong tone and simple accompaniment through to the dramatic songs of the king at Finderup Lade with their aria-like characteristics and use of a huge dramatic orchestra.

A classic work

On and off King & Marshal has been a permanent part of the Danish operatic repertoire ever since it was composed. The work is considered today to be one of the few Danish opera classics.

Finn Gravesen is an author and editor, his latest work being "Who owns the music?" ("Hvem ejer musikken?") (2006) commissioned by the Ministry of Culture.

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FACTS

Work:

King and Marshal (Drot og marsk),
1878

Artist:

Peter Heise (1830-1879).

Text: C. Richardt

MASQUERADE

TOPSY-TURVY WORLD

by Finn Gravesen

This is the true essence of the carnival - and the masquerade. Everything is upside down, and people do all that is forbidden. Here the norm is utter abandon and lack of respect. It's fun to put on fancy dress costumes, to indulge in intrigue and subterfuge, but the funniest thing of all is when the masks fall and all is revealed. In this opera, in which the dance plays a dominant role, it's done with a hearty, festive "Kehraus", a very fast dance, in which everyone participates in the party fun and irresponsible mirth of the occasion, and the whole thing comes right in the end.

Tempo and rhythm

Carl Nielsen's opera Masquerade is an adaptation of Holberg's comedy dating back to 1724. With singers, orchestra, choir and ballet. A show of everything the Royal Danish Theatre could muster. From the word go - in the overture - things move fast with a swiftly paced, teeming torrent of notes signalling life and activity. Then Henrik kicks the show off, putting the fun into action. Henrik is a servant with the young burgher Leander, son of starchy old Jeronimus, Henrik's diametrical opposite. There is no doubt that Carl Nielsen identifies himself with Henrik, giving him the lead role in the opera. In the first act, Henrik and Jeronimus each sing their own ditty to the masquerade - Henrik insisting that the charade brings all its participants happiness - Jeronimus taking a more negative stance in his song "There was peace and quiet on the streets in days of old" ("Fordum var der fred paa gaden"). He sings out all his hostile feelings to an aggressive string accompaniment, far from the calm and friendliness of the song. Once again the ambivalence. There's courting, there's dancing, non-stop - and in the end the right couples end up together, accompanied by glorious music of great gusto.

Sacrilege

Holberg was such an important part of the middle class cultural scene in Copenhagen that many people considered the very idea of setting one of the great playwright's plays to music as sacriligious. Nonetheless it became apparent on the evening of the première on November 11 1906 that Holberg had not in any way suffered from being set to opera - on the contrary, his comedy had gained a life-enhancing, utterly up-to-date counterpart from the exercise! The critics had to surrender. The opera's success was assured. And the piece has been performed several hundred times in the century that has passed since its première.

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FACTS

Work:

Masquerade, 1906

Artist:

Carl Nielsen (1865-1931).

Text: V. Andersen efter Ludvig Holberg

Musik på tværs:

www.musikpaatvaers.dk/378/8531/pageserve.php?PHPSESSID=df913ed05654a22abcf28492b3e89392

Den Internationale Carl Nielsen Musikkonkurrence & Festival:

www.cncomp.odensesymfoni.dk/

SYMPHONY NO. 4

OPTIMISTIC, LIFE-ENHANCING SYMPHONY

by Finn Gravesen

No sooner had Carl Nielsen quit his intrigue-ridden post as chief conductor of the Royal Danish Orchestra than he embarked on work on his Inextinguishable Symphony. It was a time when he was deeply tormented by thoughts of divorce, problems with colleagues, and feelings of general doubt. Nonetheless, he was able to throw himself into the composition of this life-glorifying, positive symphony - giving it the preface: "Music is life and as such inextinguishable".

From chaos and conflict to life

You're immediately thrown into the work. From the very start the music in the symphony is characterised by bustle and turmoil, angular rhythms, blaring bassoons and fiery brass playing. The contrasting elements in the music manage to keep up a dialogue, and the intense start to the work gives way eventually to a more lyrical theme, which develops into a hymn. The drums play a predominant role throughout, ending right up front in the last movement - the tympany is always threatening, staging open war with the lyrical theme. The work abounds in excitement until the very end, with the little, almost defensive tune growing all time until it at last becomes victorious.

Not programme music

"This is not programme music, there is no programme only a pointer to the proper domain of the music," the composer wrote in the programme notes for the première performance. Nielsen did not want listeners to "translate" his music into some sort of plot. Music must speak directly - without having to account for itself on an intermissive basis.

This means that the symphony should not be interpreted either as the tale of a crisis in Nielsen's marriage nor as a comment on the First World War, which was raging at the time. In a letter dated May 1915, the composer describes very precisely the nature of his project with The Inextinguishable. "I have wanted to represent all that has the will or desire to live, an urge which cannot be held down. This does not mean that I intend to debase my art by making it an imitation of nature, but instead to attempt to let it express what lies behind."

Finn Gravesen is an author and editor, his latest work being "Who owns the music?" ("Hvem ejer musikken?") (2006) commissioned by the Ministry of Culture.

(The Carl Nielsen quotation is from Schepelern & Brodin: "Koncerthaandbogen", Copenhagen 1957, Vol. 2, p. 205. The last quotation is from Steen Christian Steensen's biography on Carl Nielsen: "Musik er liv, en biografi om Carl Nielsen", Fisker & Schou, 1999.)

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Den Internationale Carl Nielsen Musikkonkurrence & Festival: www.cncomp.odensesymfoni.dk/

FACTS

Work:
Symphony No. 4 The Inextinguishable,
1916

Artist:
Carl Nielsen (1865-1931)

ANTICHRIST

SCENES FROM DOOMSDAY

by *Finn Gravesen*

The work that Langgaard has written here is not exactly a comedy. Over six scenes the composer unveils to us the times he lived in. Initially there is a general picture entitled *The Light of Pathlessness* (*Vildsomhedens lys*), set in the twilight in a mood marked by world weariness and irresoluteness, then comes *Haughtiness* (*Hoffærdigheden*) or boastfulness in which we hear the chant "The Mouth that Speaks Big Words" ("Munden der taler store ord") which echoes the empty catchwords of a godless society, with its superficial faith in progress and development. The third picture dubbed *Despair* (*Håbløsheden*) is dominated by a feeling of dejection and pessimism, after which follows *Lust* (*Begærligheden*), in which "the great whore" shows us mankind's lechery and egoism. In the very next scene, *The Struggle of All Against All* (*Alles strid med alle*), we meet "The Lie" and "The Hate" accompanied by a choir of "demons". As the world is in the process of going under, the whore is engaged in a major row with The Lie as to what is actually going on. The last picture features *Perdition* (*Fortabelsen*), in which God annihilates all these godless manifestations of the Antichrist. Modern civilisation is heading for a fall. Faith is the only salvation.

Decline and salvation

In his depiction of the horrific trends of his time Langgaard uses the vast forces of the romantic symphony orchestra - at full blast. There is a twin effect in function here in that this highly expressive and powerful music has great beauty, while at the same time ushering in decline and disintegration. That is why it is so fitted to describe the period of the early 20th century with its juxtaposed mixture of truth and falseness, beauty and decadence.

"The Music Society for Boring People" ("De Kedelige Musikforening")

Langgaard saw decline and dissolution everywhere - not least in music and dance. In the local B.T. tabloid newspaper in 1927, he made the proposal that a "Music Society for Boring People" be formed "to oppose jazz and the Charleston and all that dance nonsense and dance fever, which is threatening to stifle the spirit of people here at home ... when I contemplate the state of our times and of the art of music, it strikes me that the whole thing is Antichrist - yes, everything." (B.T. 1927).

And Langgaard's era did not want to know him either. *Antichrist* was not given its première in Denmark until 2002 - when it was belatedly a great success.

Finn Gravesen is an author and editor, his latest work being "Who owns the music?" ("Hvem ejer musikken?") (2006) commissioned by the Ministry of Culture.

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Hjemmeside om Rued Langgaard: www.langgaard.dk/

Rued Langgaard selskabet: www.ruedlanggaardselskabet.dk/

FACTS

Work:
Antichrist, 1923

Artist:
Rued Langgaard (1893-1952)

SYMPHONY NO. 3

REALITY HAS ALWAYS MOST TO TELL

by Finn Gravesen

Per Noergaard has a preference for expressing himself in a transparent, forthright fashion - in words as well as music. Perhaps this is because he is an inquisitive person constantly discovering new truths and gaining new experience. The German poet Reiner Maria Rilke's sonnet "Sing, my soul, of the gardens thou knowest not ..." ("Singe die Gaerten, mein Herz, die du nicht kennst ...") rounds off Noergaard's Symphony with this very point - as its motto - as it were.

A totally conscious expansion of consciousness

- is the term Noergaard uses to describe the process through which he takes his listeners. It begins here with deep harmonies called forth to form the first of the work's two movements - "Outer Movement" ("Ydre bevaegelse"). The tonal material slowly gathers shape, and it becomes apparent that the sound space of the symphony is identical to nature's own harmonies - the series of overtones. After this point, the tones fall in cascades with the deep wind instruments proclaiming the entire overtone spectrum. It is here that the grammar of the work's entire rhythmic dimension is revealed. The second movement, dubbed "Inner Interplay" ("Indre Samspil"), starts off from the opposite direction - from above. Like the northern lights, the tones here are cast down from the highest point to create melodies, which the large choir then takes over. Via two old medieval chants, the movement reaches the choral finale "Sing of the gardens".

Soli Deo Gloria

"All honour to God alone" Noergaard writes at the end of the symphony. This third symphony of his is a sort of breathing space in which the composer takes stock of things. His search for cosmic harmony has induced in him a way of composing in which everything in the music derives from the so-called "infinity series" - a musical technique which corresponds to the composer's experience of an all-embracing cosmic truth.

Finn Gravesen is an author and editor, his latest work being "Who owns the music?" ("Hvem ejer musikken?") (2006) commissioned by the Ministry of Culture.

LINKS

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[www.wayback.kb.dk:8080/wayback-1.4.2/wayback/20100107153228/http://www2.kb.dk/kanon/k-musik/](http://www2.kb.dk/kanon/k-musik/)

Hjemmeside dedikeret til Per Nørgård:

www.pernoergaard.dk/

FACTS

Work:

Symphony No. 3, 1976

Artist:

Per Nørgård (born 1932).

Text: Middelalderlig Maria-hymne og Rilke

SYMPHONY-ANTIPHONY

GUDMUNDTSEN - ALWAYS BUCKING THE TREND

by Finn Gravesen

That's how this composer - to whom being different is a lifelong art form - is described in a book on him by Ursula Andkjær-Olsen. And that says something important about a composer, who seems powered by a constant inner need to try and be different - time and time again. A composer who is always bucking the trend.

Harmony - Disharmony

is in fact the direct translation of Symphony- Antiphony. A clash of two contradictory concepts: order, compactness and structure as opposed to the unruly, the untamed, the living.

The first movement - Symphony - lasts scarcely 2 ½ minutes. Here things are under control, cooperation, construction, everything is kept in check. The large symphony orchestra - in excess of 70 players - is held in tight rein. The second movement - Antiphony - goes on 10 times longer. That's just the way things have to be - it takes a long time to be different - in an orderly fashion. But you can't expect all the problems to end in order and harmony, that's the rub. What happens is that the entire piece just fizzles out. The whole thing collapses and all that is left at the end are a few bounding strings, a bit of rattling percussion and one lonely mandolin.

Little, confused fiddle

Some call this sort of music "new simplicity" and there's perhaps something in the term. As soon as the music gets too bombastic, pompous or romantic, you can almost hear Pelle Gudmundsen- Holmgreen clear his throat and wipe the slate clean. It is this reluctance to or dislike of letting himself get carried away that rears up its head at the beginning of Antiphony. A diminutive, very straightforward violin theme makes its appearance as a contrast in the splendid Symphony. And bless my word if the piano doesn't perform exactly the same role with a sniggering little ragtime theme. As composer colleague Karl Aage Rasmussen says on the subject of Pelle Gudmundsen-Holmgreen: The problem is to tell the truth without wanting all the time to say what is true!

Finn Gravesen is an author and editor, his latest work being "Who owns the music?" ("Hvem ejer musikken?") (2006) commissioned by the Ministry of Culture.

LINKS

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Kort engelsk biografi på Dacapo Records:

www.dacapo-records.dk/da/artist-pelle-gudmundsen-holmgreen.aspx

FACTS

Work:

Symphony-Antiphony, 1978

Artist:

Pelle Gudmundsen-Holmgreen (born 1932)

FOLK HIGH SCHOOL SONGS

DANISH FOLK HIGH SCHOOL SONGS ARE COMMUNITY SINGING

by *Finn Gravesen*

Community singing cannot be taken for granted. It doesn't exist in many places in the world. But the Christian revival and folk high school movements of the 19th and 20th centuries made Denmark into a community singing nation and during the German occupation of the country from 1940-45, community singing played a major role in maintaining a strong national feeling of solidarity. Not to forget those homemade party songs which - in their own way - also are a community singing speciality.

Not just a number in the Folk High School Songbook (Højskolesangbogen)

The songs in the Folk High School Songbook are indeed "folk high school songs" - well, no, not all of them. If only things were that simple. Let's face it, Clausen and Petersen's "Granny's Allotment Garden House" ("Mormors kolonihavehus") probably never will be a folk high school song, nor will the Dutch-Swede Cornelis Vreeswijk's "Veronica" ("Veronica"). But there must be some explanation for the fact that one can select 12 songs and declare them to be "folk high school songs". It's not easy though because folk high school songs are very different. Just look here:

"Lovely, Joyful Summertime" ("En yndig og frydefuld sommertid") is an anonymous folksy song from the Mariager district in North Jutland, a direct, lyrical love song with a lovely ending. In "... And when I sleep sweetly, I dream happily of you, just as if you were lying beside me" ("... Og når jeg sover sødelig, om dig jeg drømmer lykkelig, ret som du hos mig lå") nearly every verse almost sings itself. "Denmark, now the light night slumbers" ("Danmark, nu blunder den lyse nat") with text by nature lyricist Thoeger Larsen and tune by Oluf Ring, is a different type of folk high school song: the straightforward, specially composed strophic song with four rhyming lines about the Denmark we love, the Danish countryside and the Danish people. And then by way of a change there's for example "We, sons of the plains, have dreams in our souls" ("Vi sletternes sønner har drømme i sind") with text by Ludvig Holstein and music by Carl Nielsen. This is a completely third type of song: a refined, carefully composed song, which can be difficult to sing for the uninitiated - but it is a folk high school song - no doubt about that!

Romance versus pop

Folk high school song texts to new melodies play a significant role - typical of this is the Midsummer Eve song "We love our country" ("Vi elsker vort land"), which in Lange-Mueller's version - a romantic melody - has broken the necks of generation upon generation of Danes assembled round the Midsummer Eve bonfire in mid-June. In this context, pop group Shu-bi-dua's new version of this number creates problems for the rest of us, because of the fact that we all insist on singing this pronounced solo number - together - in chorus. Now that it actually is a folk high school song we are singing!

Finn Gravesen is an author and editor, his latest work being "Who owns the music?" ("Hvem ejer musikken?") (2006) commissioned by the Ministry of Culture.

FACTS

- 12 Folk High School Songs (Song Anthology):
- 'Den signede dag med fryd vi ser'
- C.E.F. Weyse (1826). Tekst: N.F.S. Grundtvig (1826).
- 'Det var en lørdag aften'
- Følkelødi. Tekst: Følkeviser, gendigtet af Svend Grundtvig 1849.
- 'En yndig og frydefuld sommertid'
- Følkelødi og tekst fra Mariagerregnen.
- Trykt i A.P. Berggreens Danske folkesange (1869).
- 'Vi sletternes sønner'
- Carl Nielsen (1906). Tekst: Ludvig Holstein (1903).
- 'Jens Vejmand'
- Carl Nielsen (1907). Tekst: Jeppe Aakjær (1905).
- 'Det er hvidt herude'
- Thomas Laub (1914). Tekst: St. St. Blicher (1838).
- 'Danmark, nu blunder den lyse nat'
- Oluf Ring (1922). Tekst: Thøger Larsen (1914).
- 'I Danmark er jeg født'
- Poul Schierbeck (1926). Tekst: H.C. Andersen (1850).
- 'Jeg ser de bøgelyse øer'
- Thorvald Aagaard (1931). Tekst: L.C. Nielsen (1901).
- 'Du gav os de blomster, som lyste imod os'
- Otto Mortensen (1939). Tekst: Helge Rode (1921).
- 'Septembers himmel er så blå'
- Otto Mortensen: (1949). Tekst: Alex Garff (1949).
- 'Vi elsker vort land'
- P.E. Lange-Müller (1887)/ Shu-bi-dua (1980). Tekst: Holger Drachmann (1885).

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Folkehøjskolernes Forening i Danmark:

www.ffd.dk/

12 SELECTED SONGS

PROBABLY THE MOST WHISTLED DANISH COMPOSER IN MODERN TIMES

by *Finn Gravesen*

The headline is a comment by modern historian Paul Hammerich on composer Kai Normann Andersen. Quite an accolade for a composer who wrote for the cinema and revue theatre, both of which were extremely active fields of artistic endeavour in Denmark in the 1930s and 40s.

It was a time when talent popped up all over the place, and the public's appetite for such entertainment was insatiable. And there was music to satisfy every conceivable mood. Jolly, folksy films and musical comedy brought out the cheerful, funny, rather sentimental side of Kai Normann Andersen - in such numbers as "Come along into the Grove" ("Gaa med i lunden") and "Have you forgotten" ("Glemmer du") - lyrics by Boerge & Arvid Mueller - while veritable pearls such as "The Very Last Dance" ("Den Allersidste Dans") and "Song of the Muse" ("Musens Sang") - lyrics by Boerge Mueller - written for more soulful, thoughtful films saw him in a very different vein.

Entertainment with a meaning

Then there was the revue theatre. On the one side there was the lightweight, superficial summer revue, on the other theatrical revues with a message - and Kai Normann specialised in both styles. Examples of the former genre are such numbers as "Everyone's going around falling in love" ("Alle gaar rundt og forelsker sig") and "Come along into the Grove" ("Gaa med i lunden") - both with lyrics by Boerge Mueller - depicting sweet springtime love in musical terms. But Kai Normann Andersen's music was at its best when he had something on his mind, when something was up.

The most famous of his songs from the World War II Nazi occupation is undoubtedly "They tie us down mouth and hand" ("Man binder os paa mund og haand") from Dyveke (Dyveke) (1940) with lyrics by Poul Henningsen. The double entendre of the text can only really be understood by Danes, so the German censors let it through unknowingly. In the piece, Kai Normann's tune is precisely as ambivalent as the text - the tango refrain lending both elegance and thought-provoking profundity to the innate seriousness of the song, restoring the original sense of danger to the rather formal bourgeois dance form. Kai Normann also gave the middle class waltz new significance, one of the finest examples being in Poul Henningsen's 1941 masterpiece "In your short life" ("I dit korte liv"), where the tune gives the song a persistent intensity and strength.

Finn Gravesen is an author and editor, his latest work being "Who owns the music?" ("Hvem ejer musikken?") (2006) commissioned by the Ministry of Culture.

LINKS

"Mød mig på Cassiopeia" på Bibliotekernes Netmusik:
www.bibzoom.dk/cgi-bin/WebObjects/TShop.woa

Om Kai Normann Andersen:
www.ewh.dk/Default.aspx?TabId=2449

Det Danske Filminstitut om Kai Normann Andersen:
www.dfi.dk/FaktaOmFilm/Nationalfilmografien/nfperson.aspx?id=118258

FACTS

12 Selected Songs:

- Musens sang
- Den allersidste dans
- Pige træd varsomt
- Å hvor jeg, ih, hvor jeg, uh hvor jeg vil
- I dit korte liv
- Man binder os på mund og hånd
- Alle går rundt og forelsker sig
- Gå ud og gå en tur
- Glemmer du
- Titte til hinanden
- Drømmeland
- Gå med i lunden

Artist:

Kai Normann Andersen (1900-1967)

DANISH GOLDEN AGE

TAKE IT EASY!

by Peter Elsnab & Jesper Nykjær Knudsen

Imagine a little swinging jazz orchestra seated tightly together on a tiny stage in a smoke-filled basement room. Here the rebellious sons and daughters of the bourgeoisie abandon themselves to the rhythmically pulsating music, as they go on a spree to escape from the grim reality of the Nazi occupation, the curfew and the German soldiers patrolling the streets just outside the door.

The Danish jazz scene flourished during World War Two and the period is known as “the golden age” - the foundation of Danish jazz. And pianist Leo Mathisen captured the essence of the times with his elegant version of Fats Waller’s “Take It Easy.”

“Take it easy boy, boy/spend every dime/ have a good time,” he would sing, as his teeth sank ever deeper and deeper into the cigar, which was his permanent inventory, lodged firmly in the corner of his mouth.

A little rebellion

The American musical genre of jazz had come to Denmark in the 1920s and 1930s. Great artists such as Louis Armstrong, Coleman Hawkins, Fats Waller, Duke Ellington and Benny Carter inspired Danish audiences with their visits.

At that time jazz was regarded as something rebellious - just as rock and roll was to be later on in the 1950s. The fact was that just cultivating an American musical style was itself something of a rebellious act during the German occupation. Theatres and revues were equally rebellious in their way of cultivating an unprovable duplicity at this time. New jazz dives shot up all over the place and the number of new record releases exploded. The war may well have set limits on input from the outside world but Danish jazz musicians were still able to go on improving their style, their inspiration rooted in the swing music of the 1930s.

Star soloists

“It don’t mean a thing, if it ain’t got that swing,” as Duke Ellington wrote in 1932. Bruno Henriksen had a big swing orchestra, whereas the others had smaller bands which were better suited to playing in tiny, intimate public bars and clubs.

Leo Mathisen, violinist Svend Asmussen, trumpeter Boerge Roger Henrichsen and pianist Kjeld Bonfils were just some of the major jazz soloists of the period. Not to forget a young pianist by the name of Bent Fabricius-Bjerre who also made his appearance at that time. In short it was a true golden age. Where today would you find better examples of physical pulse, timing, unity of execution and soloists? The balance between abandon, tight discipline and being laid back? Isn’t that the very essence of jazz?

Peter Elsnab is a music journalist and Jesper Nykjaer Knudsen a culture journalist.

LINKS

Det Virtuelle Musikbiblioteks indgang til dansk guldalderjazz:
www.dvm.nu/hierarchy/theme/jazz/index.tkl?focus=&format=long&type=theme&advanced_search=&simple_search=&cclterm1=&cclfiel

Dansk Jazz Forbund: www.jazzdanmark.dk/

FACTS

Work:
Danish Golden Age Jazz
Vol. 1-4., 1988

THE SAVAGE ROSE

AN UNRULY FLOWER

by Peter Elsnab & Jesper Nykjær Knudsen

If the youth revolt's messages of peace and love are your credo, how can you agree to go and play for the American troops in Vietnam? The Savage Rose simply couldn't, a decision which their American record company had trouble in accepting, sinking all prospects of a breakthrough in the United States for the Danish band.

The Danish rock sensation was otherwise well on its way to conquering the USA with its innovative mix of pop, jazz, classical music and psychedelic rock - with a touch of the dramatic added. And on top of it all - that voice. Anisette Hansen was just 18 when she joined the newly-started Savage Rose band in 1967, attracting major attention from the very word go.

Calm yet stormy

Anisette lent in fact a totally unique character to the Koppel brothers' playful, varied, easy yet at the same time challenging compositions. With her big, controlled voice, she was able to alternate with ease between the tranquil and the turbulent, transforming the otherwise textually daunting hit single "A Girl I Knew" into a pop, funky song of great beauty:

"She couldn't see what happened /'Cause she wasn't there/They only felt her/And they weren't fair/To her and to her/lifeless body/And I lost a girl I knew," sung by Anisette in impressive style.

The themes of the debut numbers are love and marriage, while the musical inspiration of those ever-questioning composers was found in the late Beatles records, Bob Dylan and Jefferson Airplane.

Immediate success

The group was originally conceived as an album band, but already well before their debut album came out in 1968, expectations were seriously on the ascendant. Savage Rose gave a debut concert on the Open Air Stage in Tivoli Gardens in Copenhagen, becoming an immediate stage success, performing music that brimmed over with love, youth rebellion and a spirit of solidarity.

USA lay wide open just ahead, but like a wild, ungovernable rose on the heath, Savage Rose has never allowed its growth or direction to be dictated to it from outside. Savage Rose chose to remain faithful to its political stance and activities in preference to living life as pop stars.

Peter Elsnab is a music journalist and Jesper Nykjaer Knudsen a culture journalist.

LINKS

Savage Roses hjemmeside:
www.thesavagerose.net/

Mere Savage Rose på Bibliotekernes Netmusik:
www.bibzoom.dk/cgi-bin/WebObjects/TShop.woa

FACTS

Work:
The Savage Rose, 1968

Artist:
The Savage Rose

HERE YOU ARE

STREET SONGS

By Peter Elsnab and Jesper Nykjaer Knudsen

When you hear Here You Are, you can have no doubt as to why Kim Larsen is often called “Denmark’s national minstrel”. The then 28-year-old singer took a break from Gasolin’ to take on the role of Copenhagen street singer and storyteller with an album which sounds like it has been recorded by a camp fire - like a cosy jam session where someone has just happened to conceal a tape recorder in a guitar case.

Songs from the close milieu

Here You Are came out at a chaotic time coloured by the oil crisis, the battle of the sexes and the Vietnam war, a time when the art world was abuzz with clumsy slogans and elevated political agendas. Kim Larsen chose to reject this and gaze out on the world from the close milieu of Copenhagen’s Christianshavn district, where he managed to express something universal, drawing inspiration from the quarter’s diversity and wealth of offbeat characters.

Kim Larsen wanted to strike a blow for solidarity and the community spirit, achieving this aim through simple songs using uncomplicated, straightforward language. “Nanna with the red mouth/and long black nails/ she’s a drinker and a bit silly/so she’s happy/It’s so sad, so sad, they say,” is the text of “Nanna” (“Nanna”) - a song which knocks the era’s fixation with efficiency and regimentation mantras.

Revolt and tradition

But Here You Are is also a youth record. The songs express a need for revolt and a belief in a better world, that is a part of being young as well as at the same time brimming over with curiosity for life and love. Take for example the number “Maria” (“Maria”) with lines such as “Love at first glance/a little bag of candies/a film we never got to see/as we lay there on the floor.”

But Here You Are also looks back. Kim Larsen is inspired here by Denmark’s folk music tradition - from ballads all the way through folk music to folk high school songs.

In a similar way later generations of musicians have sought inspiration in Kim Larsen. This was obvious in 2005 when the whole of Here you are was re-recorded under the title Here you are 2 (Vaersgo 2) by many younger artists including Nephew, Ataf and Tue West.

Peter Elsnab is a music journalist and Jesper Nykjaer Knudsen is a culture journalist.

LINKS

Kim Larsens hjemmeside:
www.kimlarsen.dk/kimlarsen/

Værsgo på Bibliotekernes Netmusik:
www.bibzoom.dk/cgi-bin/WebObjects/TShop.woa

FACTS

Work:
Here You Are (Vaersgo), 1973

Artist:
Kim Larsen (born 1945)

SVANTE'S BALLADS

POOR OLD DEVIL

By Peter Elsnab and Jesper Nykjaer Knudsen

“Life is not the worst thing, we’ve got/ the coffee’ll soon be ready” is a line that every Dane knows, because “Svante’s Happy Day” (“Svantes Lykkelige Dag”) has long been a Danish classic with its homage to happiness in the simple, little things of life. Maybe it is because the ballad is imbued with that utterly basic feeling of cosy homeliness, which we imagine is quintessentially Danish. But it is not quite as simple as that.

The little man

Svante, who is the common figure throughout the album, is in fact a rather complex character. “My life’s barely worth a bottle,” is the opening line of the disc and Svante is full of booze and ennui at one and the same time:

“What does it help that your liver is shrinking/when your stomach is swelling/I suffer from hatred of myself/ If only I was capable of being just a little pleased with myself,” he says in “Svante’s Black Ballad” (“Svantes Sorte Vise”) in such a way that you don’t know whether to laugh or cry.

Because there is constantly a tragicomic twist to Svante with his fat belly and his egocentric melancholy. He doesn’t feel he is capable of living up to his beloved Nina or perhaps it’s just the feeling of sympathy for the little man and his inadequacies that hits many Danes in a soft spot?

Swedish Danishness

Benny Andersen’s picturesque poems and Povl Dissing’s wry singing lectures were a great success from the word go, perhaps as a reaction to the overpoliticised motifs that dominated art in the early 1970s? The tales of Svante’s doings had their source in the private sphere of life and therefore offset the socially critical aspect. But despite the fact that the stories about Svante have today become a permanent part of the Danish cultural heritage, the songs were inspired largely by the Swedish ballad tradition.

So Svante is in fact a Swede in exile, stranded in Denmark and permitting himself to have the kingdom on at the same time. This can be seen most obviously in the song “Muddy Tongue” (“Muddermaalet”) which makes fun of the Danish mother tongue, none of which prevents “Svante’s Ballads” from being a fantastic example of the range of the Danes’ mother language. There you go. The coffee is still hot...

Peter Elsnab is a music journalist and Jesper Nykjaer Knudsen is a culture journalist.

LINKS

Povl Dissings hjemmeside:

www.povldissing.dk/www.povldissing.dk/Velkommen.html

Povl Dissing og Benny Andersen på Bibliotekernes Netmusik:

www.bibzoom.dk/cgi-bin/WebObjects/TShop.woa

FACTS

Work:

Svante’s Ballads (Svantes viser),
1973

Artists:

Benny Andersen (born 1929) &
Povl Dissing (born 1938)

LIVE - LIKE THAT

OUT THAT WAY!

By Peter Elsnab and Jesper Nykjaer Knudsen

The album starts with Kim Larsen's zestful "Oh yeah - I'm the good time Charlie". This number kicks off the party and it is difficult to imagine a better occasion for festivity than hearing the "Gassers" perform live on stage.

Live - Like That presents quite simply the very best of the best numbers featuring Denmark's greatest rock band down the ages. The album not only shows us the band at its very best after many tough years of wear and tear on the road - it also manages somehow to capture those magical moments when the very nerve of live music catches the audience spellbound.

Enthusiasm and charisma

The producer has chosen to locate the singing and instruments in the very foreground of the sound picture. The dynamics of this make it absolutely impossible to remain passive. Even if you are just lying at home on the sofa. This is gripping, atmospheric American-inspired rock with links to the Rolling Stones and Jimi Hendrix as well as to the Danish ballad tradition.

At the same time Live - Like That presents a group of musicians with a great zeal for playing, could you ever imagine finding a front man with the same charisma as that charming, cheeky Copenhagener Kim Larsen? So if you suddenly get the urge to sing along with such favourite hits as "Woman of Mine" ("Kvinde min"), "Buckets of Success" ("Masser af Succes") and "Shindy Street" ("Rabalderstræde"), you can be sure you won't be on your own.

Major penetration

Sales of Gasolin's records have long surpassed the million mark. But it hasn't all been one big party. Gasolin' was a rock orchestra with a big heart in the hippie era of the 1970s. It was ordinary people's way of life, the oil crisis and pollution which provided the inspiration for the band's human, folksy and easily grasped tales of everyday life, love and society in general.

After nine years, the party ended one autumn day in 1978. Gasolin' felt they just couldn't achieve anything more. The group finished at the top, with only the dream of reaching out to that ordinary, good time Charlie in the United States unfulfilled.

Peter Elsnab is a music journalist and Jesper Nykjaer Knudsen is a culture journalist.

LINKS

Hjemmeside for Gasolinfilmen:

www.gasolinfilmen.dk/gasolinfilmen/index2.html

Kim Larsens hjemmeside:

www.kimlarsen.dk/kimlarsen/

FACTS

Work:

Live - Like That (Live sådan), 1976

Artist:

Gasolin' (1969-1977)

SUPERTANKER

DANISH ROCK IN NEW WRAPPING

by Peter Elsnab og Jesper Nykjær Knudsen

Few bands have made such a huge impression in so short a lifetime as Kliché. The Aarhus-based band barely needed to issue two albums to send Danish rock off into a new era.

In Supertanker Kliché manages to capture a time of both political and artistic upheaval in Danish society. With their anarchic approach and machine-bound minimalism, the quartet distanced itself from the hippie era as well as the grandiose American rock style of the 1970s. And they did it with popular melodic ingenuity.

Modernistic pessimism

The band uses the supertanker as a symbol of the consumer society - a major transporter of material goods. "Tanker" also means "thoughts" in Danish, so there's a pun at play here too. But behind "consumerism" lurks loneliness and alienation amid the cool, blue neon lighting, the stylish facades of suburbia and the bleak housing blocks.

"Always absent/on a cloud/feel so small/in the city/you are just as grey/and dead/there's nothing to do here," sings Lars Hug with decidedly "modernistic" lyricism in the number "Never Again" ("Aldrig Mere"). Writers such as Michael Strunge and Soeren Ulrik Thomsen practise the same blend of everyday realism, pessimism and dreams. But with Kliché it is more than just "black romanticism."

Post-modernist game

Kliché gives dark pessimism colour with a dash of irony injected into the solemnity. Modernism becomes "post-modernism" when Kliché starts playing around with form and ridicules pompous political ideologies. Two of the numbers are based on utterances by Chinese Communist leader Mao Zedong. The "Mass Line" ("Masselinjen") number goes on for 10 minutes but contains only one refrain: "The people and only the people/are the prime movers/in the creation of world history."

And what could Lars Hug be getting at in "Militia Women" ("Militskvinder") when he sings: "However glorious and proud they look/with long rifles over your shoulders/on the parade ground/lit up by the day's first rays/China's daughters have a spirit that strives to higher things/They love uniforms/not silk fabrics."

Kliché gained inspiration from the techno-pioneers of the German Kraftwerk group as well as from the punk movement and "art rockers" such as David Bowie and Bryan Ferry's Roxy Music. And don't you think that Nephew with its synth-powered "statement rock" and Corridors of Power (Magtens Korridorer), which actually has the Kliché hit "Militia Women" in its repertoire, has been listening to Kliché?

Peter Elsnab is a music journalist and Jesper Nykjaer Knudsen a culture journalist.

FACTS

Work:
Supertanker, 1980

Artist:
Kliché (1977-1983)

SIGN OF THE TIMES

VERBAL SLAPS

af Peter Elsnab og Jesper Nykjær Knudsen

No punches are pulled when “CV” - otherwise known as Carsten Valentin Joergensen - lambasts Danes in his Sign of the Times album.

Here petty bourgeois attitudes are subjected to a totally unsentimental thrashing in those rainy minor key tones, which are so much CV’s trademark.

Here charter holidays and credit card consumerism are unable to conceal loneliness and meaninglessness. Danes living in Spanish tax havens are subjected to a pitiless verbal going-over in the catchy hit “Costa del Sol” (“Costa del Sol”) - a number that we still bawl out even today! But is everyone fully aware of the sarcastic message that lies packed in behind the happy refrain “Costa del Sol where the sun dances”?

Original renewer of the language

It should surely ring a bell when the fun life on the sun coast is characterised as “our nazi, anti-social feeling of togetherness.” CV’s poisonous pen and pessimism come to expression in an utterly appealing, American-inspired rock sound provided by producer Billy Cross and this album is his most popular and folksy to date. By this point, North Copenhagen CV Joergensen had developed from being a mere Bob Dylan-inspired folk musician at the time of his début in 1974 to become an original, modernistic singer/songwriter with an inventive language and a sharp, critical eye.

Powerful impression

“Summer’s over now/it almost fled by/you’re left empty-handed and can’t keep up/everything goes black/while you stand back here and stare/as yet another dead heat is run with you as stowaway”, as CV so elegantly sings in his melancholy romantic number “The Season is Over” (“Sæsonen er slut”).

CV’s at one and the same time inventive, precise and subtle grasp of language has long since set its indelible mark on Danish music history. His immortal texts have been a source of inspiration for some of the greatest local songwriters in modern times such as Peter Sommer, Jens Unmack, Klondyke and Mikael Simpson, none of whom are afraid of dishing out more or less friendly verbal slaps in the face to the public.

Peter Elsnab is a music journalist and Jesper Nykjaer Knudsen is a culture journalist.

FACTS

Work:
Sign of the Times (Tidens tern), 1980

Artist:
C.V. Jørgensen (born 1950)

Performance

- 092** Jeppe on the Mountain
- 093** Aladdin
- 094** The Sylph
- 095** Within the Walls
- 096** The Word
- 097** Anna Sophie Hedvig
- 098** 4 revue numbers
- 099** Etudes
- 100** The Lesson
- 101** The Santa Claus Army
- 102** Black Sun live

JEPPE ON THE MOUNTAIN

WHERE AM I?

by Lone Nyhuus

The day before he'd been boozing - like so often before. The day before he'd been beaten by his wife - like so often before. The day before he'd spent his last penny on drink - as really many times before. So when, in his state of intoxication, he lay down to sleep on the dung heap, he knew that once he woke up again, he would find pure hell: A hangover, a sour wife and no money!

He rubs his eyes. And when he sees what he sees, he rubs them again. And then he really gets a fright. Elegantly clad servants politely bid him a good morning. Instead of his dirty clothes, he is wearing a fine shirt. He is treated to the finest wine and the most expensive food.

A crude joke

Jeppe has been placed in the baron's bed. The night before, as the baron and his entourage passed by the sleeping Jeppe on the dung heap, they had an idea for a practical joke. After rubbing the sleep out of his eyes and consuming a lot of good wine, Jeppe - much too willingly - accepts what the noble people are telling him: That he is the baron.

Jeppe's trouble-free life as a master lasts only one happy day. The next time he wakes up, he doesn't only have a hangover. He also has a bad-tempered wife, an empty purse and the same old, sorry life as a poor peasant on Sealand.

We must use our senses

Ludvig Holberg was one of the first Danish playwrights to write in Danish. With inspiration from the ancient Roman comedy writer Plautus and French dramatist Molière, Holberg's plays were to inform the growing Danish middle classes about common sense versus foolishness. To enable citizens to distinguish between right and wrong. Like many other authors of the age of enlightenment, Holberg trusted the intellect and the clarity of logical thinking. If the drunkard Jeppe had applied more of this, the baron and his people would not have succeeded in tricking Jeppe's so badly.

It is hilarious to see the stupid peasant believe that he can get away with ordering the bailiff and the baron's secretary about. While we laugh at Jeppe, we are also taught that we should not believe everything we hear and see.

Lone Nyhuus is a former dancer and choreographer. As a freelance journalist she works for the DR P2 radio programme Teatermagasinet (The Theatre Magazine).

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Holberg i Arkiv for Dansk Litteratur:

www.adl.dk/adl_pub/forfatter/e_forfatter/e_forfatter.xhtml?ff_id=5

Holberg på Kalliope:

www.kalliope.org/da/ffront.cgi?fhandle=holberg

FACTS

Work:

Jeppe on the Mountain (Jeppe på bjerget), 1722

Artist:

Ludvig Holberg (1684-1754)

ALADDIN

A STRANGE FATE

by Lone Nyhuus

Imagine if you could have anything you wanted. Just say the word, and it would be yours.

That is exactly what happened to the young tailor Aladdin. With sinister intentions, the evil wizard Nouredin lured him into a dark cave to fetch an old corroded lamp that didn't seem special in any way. But it contained the greatest treasure: When Aladdin rubbed it, the lamp's genie appeared and was able to grant all his desires. Irrespective of whether his wish was for the princess or the entire kingdom. How unjust it was, thought the cruel wizard Nouredin, who had found the cave after years of tireless searching and had led Aladdin to it.

Well-known story

Do you feel you know the story? Then you are probably right! Disney, for example, created a cartoon from the fairytale that originates from the famous collection of Arabic stories, *The Arabian Nights*. The Danish poet Adam Oehlenschläger did the same thing. He was greatly inspired by the wave of German romanticism and delved into our Nordic history and folklore to write *Guldhornene* (*The Golden Horns*) in 1802. Two years later, it was the Orient and its mysticism that formed the basis for his lengthy fairytale play *Aladdin*.

The Orient in Copenhagen

The play was written in verse and features myriads of characters. All of them gleaned from early 19th century Copenhagen. With her down-to-earth sense and outspoken energy, Aladdin's mother is the epitome of an old tailor's wife in the streets of Copenhagen at the time. Nouredin the Wizard is depicted as a Jewish merchant, and with his constant search for the good bargain, he lives up to the contemporary prejudices of Jews as misers. And Aladdin? He probably resembles any of the lazy youngsters that young Oehlenschläger saw running in the street.

Born to fortune

The fact that Aladdin fared so much better than most other young people was thanks to one thing: Aladdin was not the son of a tailor, but of an emir, an Arab prince. Aladdin was born to the fortune he achieved through the lamp and its genie. This is how all the creatures of the world had their predestined place. At that time, people were either born to be tailors, priests or princes.

It was only after the introduction of the Danish constitution in 1849, and the freedom of trade in 1859, that this "cosmological world order" ceased to place barriers in the way of energetic fortune hunters - such as, for instance, the ambitious wizard Nouredin.

Lone Nyhuus is a former dancer and choreographer. As a freelance journalist she works for the DR P2 radio programme Teatermagasinet (The Theatre Magazine).

FACTS

Work:
Aladdin, 1805

Artist:
Adam Oehlenschläger (1779-1850)

LINKS

Kulturkanon i undervisningen:
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Oehlenschläger i Arkiv for Dansk Litteratur:
www.adl.dk/adl_pub/forfatter/e_forfatter/e_forfatter.xsql?ff_id=58

Danske forfatterskaber:
Oehlenschläger:
www.forfatterskaber.systeme.dk/

THE SYLPH

MAGIC SEDUCTION

by Lone Nyhuus

For 19th century man, the supernatural aerial spirits, the Sylphs, were dangerous creatures. The Sylph comes to the man, preferably when he is asleep. With her beauty and grace she blows a desire for eroticism and passion into his soul, and when he wakes up, he rushes out into the wood as if he were obsessed. He rushes out to find this supernatural woman, out into the wild forest to sense and dance. Back in civilisation a (boring and) earthly fiancée finds herself deserted.

A mysterious ballet

August Bournonville was the great director of the Danish Royal Ballet in the 19th century. He created more than 50 ballets, most of them idyllic or romantic. The Sylph is Bournonville's version of a French ballet, created from Charles Nodier's romantic short story *Trilby ou le lutin d'Argail*. And here we are, right in mysticism: the hero, James, sadly leaves his homely hearth in the quest for magic.

Grace and force

In the Danish version of the ballet, the Sylph dances her seductive solos with the characteristic, gracefully rounded arms of the Bournonville style. Through the codes of pantomime, her counterpart, the witch, tells of her hateful heart and her wish to punish James for having cast her off, away from the heat of the hearth. And James, our hero, leaps, dances and spins in front of our gaping eyes. Precisely in the same way as Bournonville, who was an excellent dancer, impressed the audience of his time.

She must die

Bournonville's style and his ballets have been handed down from one dancer to the next. From generation to generation. That is why we can still, to this very day, witness James' split between the supernatural Sylph and the earthly girlfriend. And witness how James helplessly watches the Sylph fall down, take her last breath and die. Because he doesn't know how to unite the two aspects of himself: the carnal with the ethereal, the erotic with the spiritual.

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The Bournonville Homepage:

www.bournonville.com/

FACTS

Work:

The Sylph (Sylfiden), 1836.

Choreography:

August Bournonville (1805-1879)

Composer:

Herman Severin Løvenskiöld (1815-1870)

WITHIN THE WALLS

BEHIND THE HEAVY WALLS OF FAITH

by Lone Nyhuus

“Never, never. This will never be. My daughter engaged to a Herming. Never!”

In 1912, Nathansen's bourgeois moral comedy was performed for the first time at the Royal Danish Theatre. For almost 100 years, the old Jewish patriarch Levin has shouted these words across the cosy living room that is the stage. Shouted them in frustration at his daughter Esther and her wish to marry a non-Jew.

The Jewish minority

There were 300 years of discrimination of the 8,000 Danish Jews between old Levin and the daughter's wish. Many Jews were not allowed to enter Denmark. Until 1788, Jewish craftsmen were barred from the guilds, and until the early 19th century Jews had to follow special laws stipulating where they could live and what they could do for a living. In 1814, the Jewish minority achieved Danish civil rights and in 1849 was granted freedom of religion. Many Jews became integrated in Danish society during the 19th century and obtained a good social position. Esther's brothers, for example, are a wholesaler and a doctor. Despite the softening, Jewish-Christian marriages were not welcome. If need be, between Danish women and Jewish men. But not the other way round!

Extremely relevant

Some of the reviewers of the opening performance found the conflict outdated: Anti-Semitism is over, they said. But the problems of the play were extremely relevant. And with international persecutions of the Jews and the holocaust, the issue has remained topical throughout the 20th century. And still is... Try, for instance, to exchange the word Jewish for Muslim, then we have the trouble!

Henri Nathansen, who was Jewish himself, created a cast of realistic characters, idiomatic lines, and conflicts we can recognise from our own life. We have sympathy with the old Levin; sense his fear of being overtaken by developments. We follow his daughter Esther in her struggle between the desire to marry the man she loves, and the respect for her solid Jewish background.

Just human beings

The play and its characters reach out into the world and into us. Towards the end of the play we cannot help, along with Heming, in wishing for a future, that no longer divides people into Jews and Christians. A future when we are just ... human beings.

Lone Nyhuus is a former dancer and choreographer. As a freelance journalist she works for the DR P2 radio programme Teatermagasinet (The Theatre Magazine).

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Nathansen på bibliografi.dk:
www.bibliografi.dk/content.php?page=author&value=12209

FACTS

Work:
Within the Walls (Indenfor murene),
1912

Artist:
Henri Nathansen (1868-1944)

THE WORD

A MIRACLE

by Lone Nyhuus

“Isn’t there one among you who can support my hands while I pray the miracle down? I say to you everything is possible for he who has faith!”

With these words, Johannes, the pious son of the family, lies down in front of the coffin containing Inger, the dead daughter-in-law. He folds his hands and prays; no almost commands:

“Hear me, you dead woman. In the name of Jesus Christ, the Grave Buster: If God wants this. Return to life. I say to you, woman, rise!”

And Inger rises. After having lain in a coffin for five days in the best parlour of the house, she returns to life.

Struggle for God

We are in Western Jutland in the 1920s; an impoverished and religious part of Denmark. For 50 years, old Mikkel Borgen has struggled to introduce the forgiving and mild Christianity, “Grundtvigianism”. His project has succeeded - if it wasn’t for the Danish version of the Home Mission which, through its revival meetings and confession, “... makes God the chairman of a party”, as Mikkel Borgen puts it. This part of Christianity also wins followers; so many indeed, that the little community is nearly split in two.

Mikkel Borgen’s own family is not untouched by the conflict either. Anders, the son, is in love with a young girl, Anne. But Anne belongs to the “obscurantists” at the Home Mission, and both Mikkel Borgen and the girl’s father resist the love of the young couple.

The poet priest

Kaj Munk was Denmark’s great poet priest. Until his much too early death - he was shot by Nazi soldiers in 1944 - he wrote poems, articles and plays from his vicarage in Vedersøe in Western Jutland. All his writings were permeated with great faith. Faith in God, and in the word of God, as the mild and healing element in a harsh life.

This is also the essence of *Ordet* (The Word). The daughter-in-law of the house dies in childbirth, and at her deathbed the two old fathers give in and allow their children, Anders and Anne, to marry. One miracle leads to another. Soon afterwards Inger is awoken from the dead by the pious Johannes and his great faith.

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Kaj Munk Selskabet: www.munkiana.dk/

Kaj Munk Forskningscenteret: www.kajmunk.hum.aau.dk/

FACTS

Work:
The Word (Ordet), 1932

Artist:
Kaj Munk (1898-1944)

ANNA SOPHIE HEDVIG

A MURDERESS

by Lone Nyhuus

We are at an ordinary supper, with an ordinary family in Copenhagen. The aunt from Jutland has come to visit. Carrying her suitcase, hatbox and with her big eyes, she unexpectedly knocked at the door. Apart from this surprise visit, she is quite a predictable person. She is a teacher, and even more tedious than the rest of the family. This is a woman who has never done anything unexpected.

Or has she? It transpires, in fact, that she has. In the middle of supper she says that she has killed someone.

Maybe it is OK?

The family and guests are shocked: Anna Sophie Hedvig pushed Miss Moeller, the vicious and tyrannical headmistress-to-be down the stairs on purpose. Anna Sophie Hedvig is a murderess! But the assembly does not agree that the deed was wrong. For Anna Sophie Hedvig defended her own little world. She lifted her hands from their customary place in her lap and acted against the injustice of her world. She risked something - she reacted. Maybe it isn't all wrong?

Dangerous neutrality

Kjeld Abell wrote Anna Sophie Hedvig in 1939 when Denmark was facing World War II. In the years before the war - during the progress of the German Nazis - the Danish government had been neutral - a nicer word for passive, and urged the ordinary Dane to be likewise.

Most Danes followed the government's request. Apart from the few, who either joined the resistance movement or went to Spain to fight Franco's regime. These latter were the great heroes. And then there were the Anna Sophie Hedvigs. The everyday heroes and heroines, the ordinary people. From their small world, they only saw glimpses of the big world and its opportunities. That's exactly what Anna Sophie Hedvig did when she faced Miss Moeller at the top of the stairs. She realised that - like now - she had the chance to change the world, change her life and push the evil Miss Moeller down the stairs.

Would you have done the same thing?

Lone Nyhuus is a former dancer and choreographer. As a freelance journalist she works for the DR P2 radio programme Teatermagasinet (The Theatre Magazine).

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FACTS

Work:

Anna Sophie Hedvig, 1939

Artist:

Kjeld Abell (1901-1961)

4 REVUE NUMBERS

CAN A SONG CHANGE THE WORLD?

by Lone Nyhuus

Yes, it can. And if it can't, then the hope is at least that it does.

In 1957, Osvald Helmuth appeared on stage as Nielsen, a small-time draper from Aaboulevarde, and presented his letter to the Russian Prime Minister Bulganin. With downplayed humour, Nielsen's problems with a leaking roof from which water dropped down onto his pickled cucumbers were drawn into the cold war of the superpowers. These problems became Nielsen's (and Helmuth's) argument as to why Bulganin should promise that there would not be a war...

... to have an opinion

Before Helmuth's song, Liva Weel sang Poul Henningsen's (PH) They bind us hand and mouth, in the spring of 1940.

"If the song is to be a weapon, as it has always been, also in issues of high policy, then you must both amuse and have an opinion," wrote PH in the catalogue of the performance. He had been forced to alter a considerable part of the text due to the censorship that accompanied the German occupation of Denmark during World War II. Through Liva Weel and her way of presenting the song, he still said what he wanted to say: "... you cannot bind spirit" and "We have an inner fortification here" were some of the words that first silenced the audience, then had them up on their feet to give the artists a standing ovation. From that moment the song had changed the world.

... to amuse

With Kellerdirk's Schoolmates, 1956, and Dirch Passer's The finger act, 1974, the intention to change the world - to have an opinion - has been pushed in the background in favour of the wish to amuse.

Both Kjeld Petersen and Dirch Passer were born comedians. Together they were the born comedy duo: Petersen as the short, dynamically working whirlwind and Passer as a colossus of gigantic immovability. In the sketch Schoolmates we follow them through the changing situations of a conversation. From the time they meet and think they are old schoolmates until, six minutes later, they discover they are not.

In The finger act, a rhythmical and gibberish-spouting Dirch Passer folds out the story of a man and his discovery of his powerful fingers. Everybody knows fingers: we all have them - as many as ten. But Passer's fingers are fantastic. Apart from the usual features, they also contain a wealth of surprises. Can be hidden, turn up again, be halved, become spectacles - and raise or lower the level of his voice.

Perhaps The finger act doesn't change the world. But it is world art that makes the world more of a fun place to be in.

Lone Nyhuus is a former dancer and choreographer. As a freelance journalist she works for the DR P2 radio programme Teatermagasinet (The Theatre Magazine).

FACTS

Work:

4 revue numbers:

Man binder os på mund og haand
(They bind us hand and mouth)
Liva Weel, 1940.

Skolekammerater (Schoolmates)
Kellerdirk, 1956.

Brev til Buganin (The letter to Bulganin)
Osvald Helmuth, 1957.

Fingernummeret (The finger act)
Dirch Passer, 1974.

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www.revmuseet.dk/

Dirch Passer:
www.danskefilm.dk/index2.html

Dirch Passer på Det Danske Filminstitut:
www.dfi.dk/faktaomfilm/nationalfilmografien/nfperson.aspx?id=384

ETUDES

DANCING ACROSS THE BLACK AND WHITE KEYS

by Lone Nyhuus

There they are. The ballerinas. With their white legs against a black background, they resemble inverted, white notes on a black sheet of paper. And after the introductory music of Czerny's Etudes adapted by Knudåge Riisager, the many legs - the many notes on the score - begin to move.

The logic of the music

Etudes means exercises, and this is what Etudes is. Exercises that shape up more and more and become faster and faster. From the first movements of the ballet school, the simple warm-ups of the foot joints to small, fast step combinations; from slow, high leg lifts, giant leaps and large pirouettes on tiptoe, to the lifting of graceful women by strong men and their large jumps like flying elegant elephants. The dance is like the dance of black and white keys across a piano keyboard.

Everything, each measure and each step, is perceived and performed in precise keeping with the logic of the music.

Ambitious director

In 1932, a young Harald Lander was charged with the responsibility of the Royal Danish Ballet. He was an excellent dancer and, in addition, a musician. He was, for instance, a competent saxophone player. And he had ambitions. Both for himself and the Ballet.

Inspired by Russian directors and the American show tradition he brought the Ballet forward, and in 1948 the Royal Danish Ballet reached the heights of its culmination in the era. The Bournonville tradition was intact, and at the same time a group of young dancers was blossoming. They mastered everything: the old, classical, graceful ballet as well as the Russian ballet with all its virile virtuosity. And they believed in the justification of ballet - as an art form in its own right.

Ready to dance

Ballet is aesthetic beauty and musicality. This is already obvious from the first scene of Etudes in which the ballerinas are lined up, one next to the other. Ready. To dance. To let the music unfold - through their well-trained bodies.

Lone Nyhuus is a former dancer and choreographer. As a freelance journalist she works for the DR P2 radio programme Teatermagasinet (The Theatre Magazine).

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Det Kongelige Teaters hjemmeside:

www.kglteater.dk/

FACTS

Work:

Etudes, 1948.

Choreography:

Harald Lander (1905-1971)

Composer:

Knudåge Riisager (1897-1974) after Carl Czernys etuder

THE LESSON

DANCE TO THE DEATH

by Lone Nyhuus

Have you ever felt that a teacher was so intent on passing on his knowledge, that he - or she - would do anything to make you learn? That it was unbearable for the teacher, when it turned out you were not the ideal student he expected?

La Leçon is the name of an absurd play by the Romanian/French playwright Ionesco. It is about a mad mathematics and language teacher who kills his students. In Flemming Flindt's danced version, the teacher is naturally a ballet instructor. And it is the wish to learn the difficult toe dance that prompts young women to innocently ring the doorbell to his basement studio.

A basement full of instincts

Down here it is full of suppressed instincts. Well aware of the perverted inclinations of the teacher, the lady pianist steps around in small, neurotic squares while she wrings her hands in her sexually buttoned-up lap. The ballet teacher crabs sideways through the door and can hardly open his hands and arms for the common greeting: how do you do. And the student who thinks she is finally going to learn to dance gets groped and ordered about by the teacher: "A little higher", "a little longer", "a little more". More dance in the damned blister-creating toe shoes.

From text to body

As choreography, The Lesson ideally demonstrates how an ingenious and sharp text can become even more compelling and uncanny when it is translated from text to body by a gifted choreographer who clearly senses the essence of the work - in this case the absurd. We can feel it in our bones: from the first step we sense how it will end. The dance teacher would rather see her dead than see her give up the difficult steps in the ballet shoes. There is no turning back. The dance lesson ends ... with her death.

Up in the street, the next young girl is waiting. Waiting to get down into the basement studio and learn to dance on her toes.

Lone Nyhuus is a former dancer and choreographer. As a freelance journalist she works for the DR P2 radio programme Teatermagasinet (The Theatre Magazine).

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Kulturkanon i undervisningen:

www.kulturkanon.emu.dk/default.asp?ID=20054

FACTS

Work:

The Lesson (Enetime), 1963

Choreography:

Flemming Flindt (born 1936)

Composer:

Georges Delerue (1925-1992)

THE SANTA CLAUS ARMY

REALITY IN THE THEATRE

by Lone Nyhuus

At precisely 12 noon, on December 18, 1974, 100 Father Christmases in red and white gowns poured out of the car deck of the Oslo ferry to fill Copenhagen with red and white merriment in the week preceding Christmas. They were roller-skating, singing songs, and carrying live animals. They visited nursing homes, entertaining the old people with ballads, and visited schools where they played old games with the children and distributed alternative history books; and suddenly they were all gathered in the Magasin department store. Here they passed out presents to the customers. Presents they plucked from the shelves.

New argumentation

“The most important thing was not whether we were right; the most important thing is that we argued in a new way,” explains Nina Rasmussen who was one of the co-founders of the theatre group Solvognen (the Sun Chariot) in 1969.

Solvognen came from Copenhagen’s hippie district, Christiania. The group wanted to create political theatre of action through humorous and peaceful protest. These were directed against the rising price of milk, the repression of the indigenous population by the imperialist United States (the Wounded Knee action), and the existence of NATO (the Nato Army action) - as well as the commercialisation and developed bourgeois nature of Christmas. That’s where Julemandshaeren came in.

Is it theatre?!

Solvognen, which was dissolved in 1983, played a part in real life, and real life played a part in the theatre of Solvognen. When 100 red Father Christmases ventured out in the streets of Copenhagen, they were all enthusiastic about “playing the part” as the naïve Santa who believes in happiness and goodness. When they clashed with the police, were arrested and hand-cuffed, it was because the policemen were as plausible in playing their parts. All of them!

The week-long performance had an even longer aftermath. A furious debate raged in the newspapers in the ensuing months. About the freedom of speech (and limitations to it), about the general state of democracy, about theatre - and its definition. Is it theatre when 100 Father Christmases walk into Magasin and distribute presents? Solvognen said yes.

Lone Nyhuus is a former dancer and choreographer. As a freelance journalist she works for the DR P2 radio programme Teatermagasinet (The Theatre Magazine).

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www.leksikon.org/art.php?n=972

FACTS

Work:
The Santa Claus Army, 1974

Artists:
The theatregroup Solvognen

BLACK SUN LIVE

THE SCARY EDGE

by Lone Nyhuus

“Steen only succeeded in striking the right note after five years. It wasn’t the note we went for, but the expression.”

The words belong to Peter Schneidermann, the guitarist and co-founder of Sort Sol. He has also said about the same Steen Joergensen: “He was horribly out of tune, but that didn’t matter. For he was a singer. You could see it.”

Explosion and control

Peter Schneidermann, better known as “Peter Peter” is probably right. The Steen Joergensen of 1977, the year Sort Sol started as a punk band named SODS, is the same Steen Joergensen who performed ten years later in DR’s televised concert from the old Carlton porn cinema in Vesterbro. And Joergensen of the TV concert is the very epitome of a singer: As a large cat he wanders up and down the stage scaffolding - at once explosive and controlled. As if he could explode any minute. And the tune? He is probably more in tune than he was ten years before. But there is this edge. It’s not out of tune, but nearly. We have the impression that Steen Joergensen is on the edge of something dangerous. Perhaps on the edge of the Sort Sol (Black Sun), a concept that has symbolised evil from ancient times. And he has the ability to grip us - the audience - along with him.

Next to him, guitarists Peter Peter and Lars Top-Galia are “The Evil Twins”. Dressed identically, they back the big city crooner Joergensen with pulsating intensity. At the same time they tell their own jagged guitar stories.

Discharges of energy

The 1987 album Everything That Rises ... Must Converge was the artistic breakthrough for Sort Sol. To this very day, the album is unrivalled in Danish rock history. In the period around their breakthrough, the group’s concerts were some of the most forceful and intense rock music ever performed by a Danish band.

They are stories told with such violent discharges of energy that, at the same time, the musicians dissolve and create the stage in front of our eyes. They pull us along and pull us down. From there the musicians can entice us into the seduction of the stage.

As only a real singer, a real rock band, with a real stage show can do.

Lone Nyhuus is a former dancer and choreographer. As a freelance journalist she works for the DR P2 radio programme Teatermagasinet (The Theatre Magazine).

LINKS

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FACTS

Work:

Black Sun live, Carlton and Wurst, Sort Sol 1987-1988.

Childrens Culture

- 104** Building Playground
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- 112** Halfdan's ABC
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- 114** Good Sunday Morning
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BUILDING PLAYGROUND

CHILDREN PLAY WITH RUBBISH

By Jeppe Villadsen

Initially they were called junk playgrounds. Subsequent generations of children have known them as adventure playgrounds, cave towns or building playgrounds. The idea was that the children should be allowed in these special playground areas to build their own playhouses and other fun constructions using recycled materials. They were to saw, hammer and play, using the refuse, rubbish and left-over building materials on the site.

Danish invention

The original concept was the idea of landscape architect C.Th. Soerensen, who published in 1931 a little book entitled Policy for Parish and Town Parks (Parkpolitik i Sogn og Koebstad). In this publication Soerensen proposed that playgrounds should be made in which children were allowed to build everything themselves using surplus materials from building sites. He had observed that boys ran around most building sites after hours building huts and caves. C.Th. Soerensen's point was that public areas should be created which could be used for sports or games rather than just as ornamental gardens.

Happy children and teachers

The first of these new building playgrounds went into use in the middle of World War II, in the summer of 1943, in connection with a council estate in the Copenhagen suburb of Emdrup. Later on, building playgrounds spread like wildfire throughout the country. The children loved them, and educators and teachers became more and more enthusiastic about them as well, as principles of education increasingly focused on schoolchildren's creativity and the need to develop their abilities more freely. By the mid-1960s there were as many as 100 estimated building playgrounds in Denmark.

Today some of them have been removed or transformed into 'real' playgrounds but children still play in and build at building playgrounds throughout the country. Coupled with the Folk High School, these building playgrounds represent Denmark's two major independent contributions to world educational theory.

Jeppe Villadsen is a freelance journalist and editor of the magazine KBH.

LINKS

Skrammellegepladsen i Emdrup:
www.skrammellegepladsen.dk

Ellekilde Fritidscenter:
www.ellekilde.info/

FACTS

Work:
Building Playground
(Byggelegepladsen)

Artist:
C.Th. Soerensen (1893-1979)

MAYONNAISE

UGLY, EVIL, STUPID PEOPLE

by Lone Nyhuus

Should drama be funny? Yes, otherwise it can't be taken seriously!

This exchange of words is by Jess Oernsbo and gleaned from a conversation he has with himself in the catalogue for the first performance of Majonaese (Mayonnaise) in 1988. The play was actually written for Aarhus Theatre, but had been rejected by the drama consultants, and the actors had threatened to strike if they were forced to perform something of the sort.

Something like that! But what is this something Oernsbo, the unofficial Danish champion in foul writing, throws in our faces?

Picture of Denmark of today

The starting point is a picture of a family: a forcedly jovial manikin, a self-content, extremely fat missus and their three warped children. They began to speak to Oernsbo. To tell their story.

They recount how the family shares rather oily baths. Except for the big brother, he beats others up and is - according to mummy - "as delicious as marzipan". And you don't wash marzipan, do you?

They speak of the younger brother who makes money for the family with his sister, Soes. They select a rich man. Soes who is good-looking gets him drunk, and when they - thoroughly plastered - get down into the street, the brother throws himself in front of the car. Pretends to be frightfully injured. This is an ideal basis for several years of blackmail.

And they tell of the neighbour, whose cat they hang from its legs out of the window, and whom the family generally disturbs with their filthy bathwater - they let the water trickle down into his flat through a hole in the floor.

Simple survival

This is how the figures focus on splashing and greasing towards their own final collapse. Governed, as they are, by an urge for simple survival - almost like animals. Not surprisingly, Oernsbo is convinced that the renowned theory of Darwinist development never took place. The survivors are not the fittest. There are people - like this family - who are not particularly fit for survival. They live their lives like a broken arm.

That is the reality. With Oernsbo, you don't go to the theatre to avoid reality. You go to the theatre to see real life. Particularly, its dark, disgusting and the abnormal aspects. It's dead serious. But it is also funny!

Lone Nyhuus is a former dancer and choreographer. As a freelance journalist she works for the DR P2 radio programme Teatermagasinet (The Theatre Magazine).

FACTS

Work:
Mayonnaise, 1988

Artist:
Jess Ørnso (born 1932)

LINKS

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THE LITTLE ONES SING

IDYLL, THRILLS AND HORROR IN THE CHILDREN'S ROOM

By Lone Nyhuus

When you have a look at the The Little Ones Sing songbook, it all looks very nice and harmless on the surface. A little boy with blond hair decorates the front page. He has his head stuck into an open book and sings - probably repeating the text in an innocent way.

Sweet thrills

Bitte Boecher's illustration signals idyll and an absence of any danger. But when you open the songbook, you find that it pours out the one cruel song after the other. We start with the little black kitten with the white paws. Looking further down the page, the notes appear. Without figurations or bass notes, written in such a way that anyone with the barest minimum of knowledge of music can sit down at the piano - or put a recorder in his or her mouth - and play "Look at the little kitten" ("Se den lille kattedrilling"). So far so good. But come to the bottom of the page and things start to go wrong. Bitte Boecher has drawn a mouse here and in the text the cat asks the mouse to come out and play. So we can all guess what's going to happen - things are going to go terribly wrong!

Already from the first song onwards, we are presented with double-edged texts. The little child is happily thrilled by the cat's playing with the mouse, the story about the boy Poul, who let his hens fly around the garden - to the great joy of the fox - and the tale of the 10 little cyclists, nine of whom come to grief. Fortunately the child can turn over to the next page. Here he encounters the monk walking around peaceful meadowlands or the little lamb which bleats bah, bah.

Popular children's songs

It was the schoolmaster Gunnar Nyborg-Jensen who collected these well-known children's songs and games. From the time of the World War II occupation of Denmark, he was known as studio host for the We sing together (Vi synger sammen) request programme on the radio, and when in 1948 he finally got tired of dragging round heavy songbooks and loose stencilled music sheets all the time, he collected the most popular children's songs in a little book.

This became the The Little Ones Sing songbook. Down the years, 1.5 million copies of the book have been printed, a special anniversary CD with locally renowned singers interpreting the songs has achieved huge sales, and a few songs have had to be replaced. For instance, "In Niggerland, bananas grow" ("I niggerland bananen gror") was expunged from the songbook in 1993. Otherwise the songbook that you see today in Danish children's rooms and institutions is more or less unchanged. As it has been for more than two generations.

Lone Nyhuus, a former dancer and choreographer, is a freelance journalist working for i.e. Danish Radio Programme 2's Theatre Magazine.

LINKS

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www.musikbibliotek.dk/25509/recompiled

Høst & Søn: www.hoest.dk/hostogson.aspx

FACTS

Work:

The Little Ones Sing (De smaa synger)

Artist:

Gunnar Nyborg Jensen (red.)

PALLE ALONE IN THE WORLD

TRAM DRIVER ON ROUTE 8

By Christian Monggaard

Who hasn't once in a while dreamed of being able to do everything that he wanted to do and get away with it without any bother or hullabaloo? That is the dream that the little boy Palle has and one morning it is fulfilled. When he wakes up, he finds himself completely alone in the world.

He washes his nose scantily, dips his toothbrush in the water to give the impression that he has brushed his teeth and then he sets off on an adventure in a deserted Copenhagen. He visits a sweet shop. He drives a tram, on route 8. He goes into a bank and withdraws a bag of money, not stupid notes but jingling, hard cash. But he later on tips the money into the sewers, because he knows no one to whom to pay it.

A touch of science fiction

In Palle Alone in the World we witness well-known everyday life from a new angle, because the world has been emptied of people. This gives the film at one and the same time a dreamlike quality and an authentic sense of reality. A dash of science fiction permeates this poetic little film, which is so perfectly directed by Astrid Henning-Jensen. When it first came out, the film attracted considerable international attention. The film is based on Jens Sigsgaard's classic children's book of the same name.

Moral of the film

Palle Alone in the World is a funny, charming film. But it does not in any way pretend that a solitary existence in the world can bring happiness in the long term. After all, it is best to have someone to share life with, is the message.

Astrid Henning-Jensen made films together with her husband Bjarne and Palle Alone in the World was her première as a film director. Along with the couple's Those Damned Kids (De Pokkers Unger) (1947), the film is regarded as one of the very first Danish children's films. A few years earlier Bjarne Henning-Jensen was responsible for making the splendid film Ditte, Child of Man (Ditte Menneskebarn), which is listed in the Film Canon. One of the strengths of Palle Alone in the World is the film's sympathetic depiction of a child's fantasy world. Here Astrid Henning-Jensen places herself at eye level with her young main character and shows through him with great conviction the child's whimsicality and spontaneous approach to the world.

Christian Monggaard is a film reviewer and critic for the paper Dagbladet Information.

LINKS

Filmen hos DFI:

www.dfi.dk/faktaofilm/nationalfilmografien/nffilm.aspx?id=7290

Astrid Henning-Jensen i Dansk Kvindebiografisk Leksikon:

www.kvinfo.dk/side/170/bio/423/query/astrid%20henning-jensen/

FACTS

Work:

Palle Alone in the World (Palle alene i verden), 1949

Instructor:

Astrid Henning-Jensen (1914-2002)

Duration:

25 min.

DONALD DUCK

WITH DONALD DUCK ON THE BLUE OCEAN WAVE

by *Martin Blemsted*

The Golden Helmet is a strip cartoon by the American artist Carl Barks. Barks is the best known Donald Duck cartoonist, so you have surely read some of his stories. Barks frequently used things from real life when illustrating his stories. The Golden Helmet was inspired by the Nordic Vikings and their perilous journeys across the Atlantic Ocean.

Sailing race for the helmet

In the tale, Donald Duck and his nephews Huey, Dewey and Louie are on the hunt for a mystical, ancient Viking helmet - "The Golden Helmet". The helmet belonged originally to Olaf the Blue, who was the first to sail to America. This means that the one who finds the helmet will become King of North America! Unfortunately Donald is not the only one who wants to get his fingers on the Viking helmet - the evil villain, Azure Blue, successor of Olaf the Blue, is also out to grab the treasure.

America's true discoverer

The character Olaf the Blue is inspired by a real life person: Leif the Lucky, who sailed to America on board a Viking ship over 1,000 years ago. It can be said that Leif the Lucky "discovered" America at least 500 years before Columbus. Not having our modern aids for navigation at sea, the old Vikings were obliged to rely on tracking the sun and the stars to find their way across the Atlantic.

Starry firmament as navigator

At one point in the story, Azure Blue steals Donald's ship and puts the duck and his nephews on a little life raft. This means that they, just like the old Vikings, are forced to use nature's own aids in their hunt for the Golden Helmet. Whether or not Donald and his nephews manage to find the helmet before the villain will not be divulged here.

Martin Blemsted is editor of the Donald Duck & Co. (Anders And & Co.) weekly.

LINKS

Dansk Donaldist Forening:
www.ddfr.dk/

Artikler: tre Carl Barks analyser:
www.freddymilton.dk/carl_barks_analyse_1.htm

Tegneseriemuseet:
www.tegneseriemuseet.dk/emner/aa&co.htm

FACTS

Work:
Donald Duck: The Golden Helmet,
1954

Artist:
Carl Barks (1901-2000)

HIGH SEAT CHAIR

DITZEL'S DOGMAS

by *Charlotte Jul*

Nanna Ditzel had three children, so it was pretty obvious for her to focus on designing furniture for children. The High Seat Chair, dating from 1955 along with her Toadstools (Trisser) were nothing short of a revolution, because they were some of the first items of children's furniture ever in which just as much attention to detail was paid as in furniture intended for adults. The thought of spending money on quality furniture for kids was extreme in those days! The High Seat Chair is formed in a straightforward style, a continuation of the simple design Nanna Ditzel learnt during her training with Kaare Klint and the functionalist tradition - a tradition which Ditzel further developed and departed from.

Breakaway designers

Nanna Ditzel covers a wide field: from design concepts, to furniture, jewellery, tableware and textiles - and a long period: from her start at the Craftsmen-Designers' Carpentry Day School in 1943 until 2005 when she died - still active as a designer. She was one of the "young revolutionaries" along with her husband, Joergen Ditzel, the artist Gunnar Aagaard Andersen and the designer Verner Panton. Gunnar Aagaard Andersen in particular worked closely with the Ditzel furniture designer couple. The trio broke with conventional norms, they were - like Panton - preoccupied with using space in a new way. A staircase concept in clear colours, which divided the room up into different levels, so people could sprawl about while they spoke to one another. Or suspended swinging basketware seating which swayed in the room just like a hammock. Why does a chair absolutely have to have four legs?

Ditzel awarded top order

Nanna Ditzel lived and worked in London for 18 years and her frequent study trips abroad inspired new ideas within her. Her encounter with the turquoise and pink colours of Mexico inspired her to develop the Hallingdal textile line which you can still see used in some Danish State Railways trains. In 1995 Nanna Ditzel was invested with the Order of Dannebrog, and in 1998 the Ministry of Culture granted her a lifelong endowment for her work.

Children's furniture universe

High Seat was one of the first furniture designs for children. Today the market has exploded and many designers are working with furniture and arrangements for children. Here in Denmark the artistic duo Bosch & Fjord are in 2006 putting the finishing touches to a improvement project at Ordrup School, near Copenhagen. Here a variety of different tubular seating arrangements, holes, hollows and rooms within a room combine to create environments which promote diversified education and creative new thinking. All very much in the Ditzel spirit. Fifty years after her first children's furniture ...

Charlotte Jul is a writer on design and responsible editor of the periodical KUNSTUFF.

FACTS

Work:
High Seat Chair (Høj stol), 1955

Artist:
Nanna Ditzel (1923-2005)

LINKS

Nanna Ditzel Design:
www.nanna-ditzel-design.dk/

Nanna Ditzel i Dansk Kvindebiografisk
Leksikon:
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origin/170/query/nanna%20ditzel/](http://www.kvinfo.dk/side/597/bio/495/origin/170/query/nanna%20ditzel/)

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aspx?ID=170](http://www.haungaard.dk/Nanna_Ditzel.aspx?ID=170)

THE LEGO BRICK

THE UNIVERSAL BUILDING BLOCK

By Charlotte Jul

A little piece of plastic. Normally rectangular. With small round pips which rise from the surface of the block to enable it to interlock with other bricks. A tiny invention with a great effect! An innovation in the field of toys in that the focus is transferred from the object to the interplay between the child and the object. An interactive toy that most adults wouldn't mind playing with either! Is it not incredible that such a limited number of blocks with a restricted number of functions is capable of creating such an unlimited range of possibilities? The simple and unique format of the Lego building block can stimulate and challenge the child's creativity for hours, bestowing international recognition on Lego since the 1960s. Since that date more than 350 billion Lego bricks have been sent out into the world.

Legoland, man!

So what did you build? We had a huge box full of Lego bricks, which we transformed into houses, aircraft and motor cars. And Legoland in Billund, west Denmark! With its fabulous replicas of well-known buildings in Denmark, Legoland was the greatest thing I had seen in all my life. Was it really possible to build all that with Lego bricks? The concept of creating a coherent universe - with "educational value" added - as was the case with Legoland, sowed without any doubt the first seeds of the development we know today within the fields of toys and computer games. Everything is endowed with its own world of accessories, language, clothing, codes - you name it! Toys and computer games have become a brand of their own - a universe one wants to be part of!

Present day needs

The Lego system is good because it is robust and can be used with other toys such as Playmobil - to take one example. Lego has been developed down the years in such a way that there are Lego kits to suit every age group. However, modern technology has overtaken the broad demand for Lego bricks. Today children have other needs and challenges in an age where the computer has become an indispensable tool for education and play. But the Lego building block in all its simplicity has nonetheless been able to stay the course in an era of major technological advances. Because its simple, straightforward concept will always have something to say - also in the future.

CharlotteJul is a writer on design and responsible editor of the periodical KUNSTUFF.

LINKS

Et internationalt netværk af Lego-entusiaster:
www.lugnet.com/

Legos hjemmeside:
www.lego.com/en-US/Default.aspx

FACTS

Work:
The Lego Brick, 1958

Artist:
Godtfred Kirk Christiansen
(1920-1995)

SILAS AND THE BLACK FILLY

THE BOY WITH THE MAGIC FLUTE

by Anna Karlskov Skyggebjerg

We find ourselves in an unknown country in the distant past, where the young lad Silas comes drifting down a river in a primitive boat. Silas's passage seems peaceful enough but on the banks of the river horse trader Bartolin is contemplating stealing the boat. But Bartolin is totally unaware of the strength of the craft's almost invisible passenger. It is the irony of fate that it is Silas who manages to outwit the horse trader, and not the other way round. His encounter with the boy ends up costing Bartolin a black filly.

Silas has fled from his mother because he refuses to go along with her plans for the future. The sail down the river is the beginning of a dramatic journey, in which among other exploits, he saves the children Maria and Ben Godik from the miserable conditions under which they live. Silas is endowed with a special talent, namely the ability to play on a magic flute, which has the capacity to turn animals and humans mad. The flute is his peaceful weapon against those adults who hit their children and order them around.

Belief in children

The story shows a powerful belief in the child. Silas represents hope in a world in which children are repressed. He is able to revolt against the grown-ups, despite the fact that he is nearly always on the run. The story has a symbolic quality, awakening almost biblical associations. Silas in the boat is reminiscent of Moses, who arrives on the scene sailing in a basket in the Old Testament. Children are regarded as competent readers, who are fully capable of grasping the book's message: The fact is that children are worthy human beings in possession of an intact sense of responsibility.

New children's literature

Silas and the Black Filly marked the debut of Cecil Boedker (born 1927) as a children's writer. Before that she had published poems and novels for an adult audience. The book is epoch-making in both her authorship and in Danish children's literature. It won the Danish Academy's children's book competition as well as attaining overwhelming popularity among readers. Today you can buy all the Silas books (12 volumes) in a handsome bound edition.

Silas and the Black Filly appeared in the same year as Ole Lund Kirkegaard's Little Virgil (Lille Virgil) and Benny Andersen's The Snoevs and Eigil and the Cat in the Bag (Snoevsen og Eigil og Katten i saekken). These books show a new orientation in children's literature, in which the author speaks to the child at eye height and in an artistically formulated language.

Anna Karlskov Skyggebjerg, a teacher at the Centre for Children's Literature (Center for Boernelitteratur), has written "Fantastic Tales in Danish Children's Literature 1967-2003" ("Den fantastiske fortaelling i dansk boernelitteratur 1967-2003") (Roskilde University Press 2005)

LINKS

Cecil Bødker i Dansk Kvindebiografisk Leksikon:
www.kvinfo.dk/side/170/bio/260/

FACTS

Works:

Silas and the Black Filly (Silas og den sorte hoppe), 1967

Artist:

Cecil Bødker (born 1927)

HALFDAN'S ABC

FROM ANE TO AAGE

By Marianne Eskebæk Larsen

Fortunately it is the very fewest of Danish children today who get through childhood without coming across Ane, Benny and Charlotte (ABC) or Frivolous Freddy from Fakse (Freddy Fraek fra Fakse), Yuleman Jules (Julemand Julie) and mad Canon King Clod (Kanonkongen Knold). Halfdan's ABC (1967) is namely both a part of the children's literary canon as well as a part of the national heritage.

The picture book is a survey of the alphabet from A(ne) to Aa(ge) - Aa being the last word of the Danish alphabet. It is one of the books that Danish schoolchildren use when they are learning to read. The words create pictures and the pictures words in a strange, dramatic, odd, poetic, funny and frightening universe.

"Halfdanish" word play

Halfdan Rasmussen's nonsense verses are one big play on words, but he makes quite sure that the verses always rhyme. Here you find a welter of alliterations and end rhymes woven together in rhythmic sentences, making the verses easy to remember and fun to sing. The reader encounters puns and alliterations about pigs and pimples, and other fun plays on words such as "Ane's anemones". To read the book out aloud is a bit like tasting the words, try it for yourself! You'll notice that different words lie differently in the mouth and that language is really sound and not just visual symbols on a piece of paper.

Artist Ib Spang Olsen is brilliant at translating the quintessence of Halfdan's texts into pictures. He manages to maintain a realistic yet at the same time highly imaginative tone in his illustrations, which capture the wit and weirdness of the verse. Ib Spang Olsen's heavily shaded and highly atmospheric brush creates figures which are lively and at the same time never unambiguous. Else-pelse-poelsesnak (poelse = sausage) simply has to be illustrated showing a monstrous lady looking like an overswollen sausage, whose hands and feet resemble little apertures which can barely hold in all the meat!

Picture book history

The book demonstrates the close link between music, pictorial art and language, creating at eye height with the child a humorous contrast to the systematic writing of the time.

Halfdan's ABC has become a classic, which every subsequent ABC has been compared with. But the book itself can in fact be seen historically within its genre as a continuation of Claus Eskildsen's Ole Bole ABC (1927) with illustrations by Storm P. Halfdan's ABC came out at the same time as Flemming Quist Moeller's Bicycle Gnat Egon (Cykelmyggen Egon), and 1967 is thus considered an important year in the history of Danish picture books.

Marianne Eskebaek Larsen is a research assistant at the Centre for Children's Literature (Center for Boernelitteratur).

FACTS

Work:
Halfdan's ABC, 1967

Artists:
Halfdan Rasmussen (1915-2002) &
Ib Spang Olsen (born 1921)

KAJ AND ANDREA

PERPETUALLY YOUNG ANIMAL DOLLS

by Lone Nyhuus

We all know them. The turquoise-striped, shiny- feathered, billed creature Andrea and the grumpy, rather jazzy, broad-mouthed frog Kaj! And nearly all Danes are also capable of singing a few lines of their songs, such as the Commit Spoonerisms Song (Bakke snagvendt-sangen): "If you say missetand (cat tooth), it comes out as tissemand (penis)." A piece of spoonerist text often accompanied by a little snigger.

Behind a sofa

The hand dolls Kaj and Andrea made their entrance into the life of Danes via the TV screen in the spring of 1971. The basis of the whole show was a sofa, which the dolls were able to stand on - and the doll operators could hide behind. Singer and musician Povl Kjoeller and actor Kjeld Noergaard were designated the task of appearing together with the dolls; they were grown-up, reasonable sort of people that not only the childlike dolls but also the child viewers could rely on.

Nothing to fear

When trouble breaks out - and that happens specially involving Andrea, who is the very epitome of a stubborn five-year-old - a solution is always near at hand. The universe is harmonious, so is the camerawork. With the help of cool pictures, we are able to follow Kaj and Andrea's journey on their way to reaching an understanding of the world of the adults. It can be a question of learning to go to the grocer's. Or an attempt to grasp something as abstract as the phenomenon of time. "Yesterday tomorrow was today" repeats Andrea, for example, in interrogative mode. The parrot is also aware of the importance of a good rhyme, because that's what helps people to remember the songs! Those songs in which the TV broadcasts abound.

Just as fresh as in 1971

These well-known doll figures have fascinated children (and adults) in Denmark since 1971, achieving - along with one of the show's founders - Povl Kjoeller - a sort of cult status. With their own website, countless repeats of their hits, an entire repeat performance of the show in 1999 - this time with Ole Kibsgaard and Christine Skou as the grown-ups - we can only conclude that you can never be too old for Kaj and Andrea. And Kaj and Andrea are still on the ball - just as fresh as back in 1971 when they presented themselves to the public for the first time.

Lone Nyhuus, a former dancer and choreographer, is a freelance journalist working for i.e. Danish Radio Programme 2's Theatre Magazine.

LINKS

Kaj og Andreas hjemmeside:

www.dr.dk/b/Oline/sider/find-rundt.htm

FACTS

Work:

Kaj and Andrea, 1971

Artists:

Danmarks Radio, Kjeld Nørgaard (born 1938)

Hanne Willumsen (born 1939) &

Katrine Hauch-Fausbøll (born 1945).

Music:

Jeppe Kaas (born 1966) & Povl Kjøller (1937-1999)

GOOD SUNDAY MORNING

BIG LITTLE WORLD

by Peter Elsnab & Jesper Nykjær Knudsen

“Just as we’re playing together here on our street/We have to split up and go in and eat”

A feeling which all children know, a feeling which surely rings a bell for most people when they think back on their childhood? Good Sunday Morning is in fact a record for children which adults can also get a lot out of. At a time when children’s culture was often dominated by ‘bongo drum pedagogy’ or the pointed forefinger, Anne Linnet made a children’s album which set off in a very different direction.

Kid-size rock

At that point Linnet had just dissolved her Shit & Chanel rock band and was on the way to forming her own Anne Linnet Band. Good Sunday Morning is essentially kid-sized rock music - rock for children - music abounding in idiomatic refrains and zestful melodies. Anne Linnet has written a number of texts in which children play the role of the storyteller; here no bossy parents are around to spoil the ambience with their words. In the song dubbed “Sigurd”, it is Linnet’s own daughter Eva who sings; this is just one of many songs which have long since become the permanent repertoire of the Danish kindergarten.

The simple refrain:

“Mum, I would like you to/say hullo/ to my new friend/ he’s called Sigurd” goes straight into the listener’s ear with its tale of burgeoning friendship.

But maybe the song is also a nostalgic dream picture for adults, making them think back to the idyllic childhood they wished they’d had. With the whiff of freshly-baked chocolate cake in the kitchen?

Full of wonder

The 13 songs in Good Sunday Morning glow with that sense of curiosity and wonder about the world which dominates childhood. How would it be to fly just like a bird? Why do you get a tingling feeling in the stomach when you kiss on the mouth? And why do the grown-ups stay in bed so long on Sunday mornings?

Good Sunday Morning sets childhood to words and music, without in any way being sentimental or schoolmasterish. The world is big, when you yourself are only little. And it doesn’t really get any smaller as time goes by. Not even when you are old enough to decide for yourself when to go in and have supper.

Peter Elsnab is music critic on the URBAN newspaper and the music periodical Gaffa. Jesper Nykjaer Knudsen is a writer on culture and music.

LINKS

Anne Linnets hjemmeside:www.annelinnet.dk/

Anne Linnet i Dansk Kvindebiografisk Leksikon:
www.kvinfo.dk/side/170/bio/1902/

FACTS

Work:
Good Sunday Morning
(Go’ soenda’ morn’), 1980

Artist:
Anne Linnet (born 1953)

RUBBER TARZAN

A GOOD FRIEND

by Christian Monggaard

“There is always something you’re good at, it’s just a question of finding out what it is,” says crane driver Ole to Rubber Tarzan, who goes by the civil name of Ivan Olsen. Ivan is a little, melancholic boy with no friends, he doesn’t believe in himself or that he will ever be able to learn to ride a bicycle, read, play football or eject a jet of spittle, like all the other boys.

Ivan’s dad, a passionate fan of Tarzan, thinks that Ivan is hopeless and gives him the nickname “Rubber Tarzan”. In school the stupid, big boys dip Ivan’s trousers in water every single day. His mother is always far too preoccupied with housework to notice that Ivan is unhappy. But then he meets Ole - the eternal optimist. Ole is himself a bit of a Rubber Tarzan and becomes Ivan’s good and faithful friend.

Tolerance and bullying

Rubber Tarzan has been called “the best children’s film in the world”. It has to be said that it is difficult to point to a Danish children’s picture which has had greater significance for so many generations of cinemagoers and which to such a high degree created a school for the Danish children’s movies of the 1980s and 1990s.

Rubber Tarzan is an edifying tale. It sides with the underdog, the little, weak people in society - without being awkward or moralising, but with humour and sympathetic insight. The film deals with bullying and tolerance, while administering at the same time severe criticism to self-centred parents who fail to look properly after their children.

Magic realism

With the filming of Ole Lund Kirkegaard’s books - e.g. Otto is a Rhino (Otto er et naesehorn) and Rubber Tarzan - so-called magic realism made its entry into Danish film in the 1980s. The stories take place in everyday environments full of children, confusion and stupid parents. Every now and again something unusual, magical happens which gives reality a fairytale touch.

Soeren Kragh-Jacobsen has rearranged and revised Kirkegaard’s original story to anchor it more firmly in the world of reality. But the magical realism remains intact and can be used in an exciting way to cast unexpected light on some of life’s great questions.

Christian Monggaard is a film reviewer and critic for the paper Dagbladet Information.

LINKS

Det Danske Filminstitut:

www.dfi.dk/faktaofilm/nationalfilmografien/nffilm.aspx?id=104

FACTS

Work:

Rubber Tarzan (Gummi Tarzan), 1981

Instructor:

Soeren Kragh-Jacobsen (born 1947)

Duration:

89 min.

THE NUTCRACKER

A SWIRLING, WHIRRING NUTCRACKER

by Lone Nyhuus

A ballerina whirls round on the sharp tips of her toes, while in contrast the break dancer spins around on his head. Other dancers on the stage are masters of the electric boogie; they jerk their arms and legs and glide over the floor with almost invisible steps, their bodies throbbing with “electricity”. The music brims over with strains from Tchaikovsky’s original score for the great Russian Nutcracker ballet, Safri Duo’s thumping rhythms and tuneful passages by Thomas Koppel. It blazes out over the audience and sucks us with it ...

... into the story of Clara, who finds herself on the fine-drawn frontier with adult life, and who is going to have to endure so much pain before she meets her beloved prince. Before she can see and recognise her own sexual drive. Before she can become an adult woman.

Mouse King’s realm

This fairytale has been told before. The original story was written by Germany’s E.T.A. Hoffmann in 1819. Seventy-three years later Russian composer Tchaikovsky wrote the ballet music to Hoffmann’s tale about Clara, who is given a magical nutcracker, which has the power to bring all her toys to life for one night. The nutcracker plunges little Clara into a world which is ruled by a wicked Mouse King, who by the way greatly resembles her own real life father.

The whole world’s dance

Until 2003 all performances of the Nutcracker were danced according to the strict choreography of classical ballet. Then came Danish hip-hop choreographer Steen Koerner’s version of the piece in which street dances from all over the world made their entry on the stage. Brazilian capoeira, American breakdance and brilliantly executed hip-hop fight for our attention. Along with Clemens’s idiomatic texts, the choreographies whirl and twirl us into a 21st century version of the Nutcracker.

But you can still see that this is an updated version of a great Russian ballet. Because in the very midst of it all stands the magical ballerina - just like in the original work. And it is she who in the end saves everything.

Lone Nyhuus, a former dancer and choreographer, is a freelance journalist working for i.e. Danish Radio Programme 2’s Theatre Magazine.

FACTS

Work:
The Nutcracker (Noeddeknaekkeren),
2003

Artist:
Steen Koerner (born 1968)