

GERING & LÓPEZ GALLERY



World famous Conceptual artist makes drawings in the pocket

Can one make drawings in ones pocket? Yes, the American William Anastasi can! And now he will come to Copenhagen and Esbjerg.

By Trine Ross

You can meet many strange people in New York's subway, but back in the 1960s one of the most curious was a man who daily drove across town wearing hearing phones. In each hand he held a pencil, which as a seismograph recorded the train's movement on the paper he had mounted on a plate in the lap.

Still a central figure in Conceptual art

The man is called William Anastasi, he was born in Philadelphia in 1933. Although he no longer takes the trip during New York on a daily basis, he remains one of the key figures in Conceptual art. As the name more than implies, it is about works of art, where the concept, the idea, is the main focus. And good ideas Anastasi has many of. And therefore one should not expect painting in the traditional sense, when visiting an exhibition of works by Anastasi, either at the group show 'ONE Copenhagen' in Stalke Up North, or when the Esbjerg Art Museum next week, opens the doors to an extensive retrospective of his works.

Draws with nails

Instead Anastasi works with a number of materials that we know best from our daily lives. Nails, for example. Which he can use to draw shadows on the wall, as it happens in his work 'Jacob's Ladder'. The title is taken from the Old Testament, where the patriarch Jacob dreams of a ladder that leads directly up into heaven, and Anastasi emphasizes precisely this dream by allowing the shadow of the nails to outline the ladder.

Many of his other works are even more intangible, so it is natural, when talking with him on the phone from Copenhagen to Venice (sic. Modena), where he is currently exhibiting, to ask him whether he often finds that the audience finds it difficult to relate to his works.

Ross, Trine. "World Famous Conceptual Artist Makes Drawings In The Pocket." *Politiken*, June 5, 2009.

GERING & LÓPEZ GALLERY

Which provokes a deep laughter in the phone:

"Yes, well, I can in every case tell you that many seem to be confused about the variety of my works. When I sat and looked through the big book published in connection with my exhibition in Emilio Mazzoli Gallery here in Italy, I thought that if you do not know anything in particular about Concept Art from the 1960s until today, then you would probably be a little confused. One would think that I am completely lost, and jump from one place to another. Which I, in one sense or another, am doing.

Lost in his own art

This has to do with the fact that Anastasi, which is quite unusual for an artist, does not have good visual memory. Often he can not remember his own works and is sometimes surprised when he sees them again, which he sees almost as a virtue for a Conceptual artist.

'In art I am easily lost. I keep losing my way and then try to find my way back again. But also in reality. Venice is one of the cities I get lost in the quickest, but then I also got lost in Antibes – which makes everyone who has been there wonder, as it shouldn't be possible! ".

Working with the body

But regardless of what he himself says, there are a few benchmarks in Anastasi art. First he works intensively with the body, though rather than creating an image of it, Anastasi lets the body be an active element in the creation of the work.

As he drew the movement of the train under the streets of New York.

Secondly, and here it becomes somewhat more abstract, he uses ethical benchmarks.

Anastasi has reached the conclusion that morality is a purely local, while the ethical choice can always be determined by the simple doctrine that we must do to others what we wish they would do to us.

But what is it you want to do with the spectator who looks at one of your works?

"I have never thought of that. But it is a very good question. I actually create my art for myself – with no thought for the audience. In my works I try to do what is ethical for me. The works are a self-reflection, where I try to relate to my other works and to the rest of Contemporary art '.

Away with prejudices

So his best advice is that one should be open. Open for self-reflection, try to look past ones preconceived notions of how art should be.

'Prejudices should simply be thrown into a closet and then the door should be locked. Although one might be confused to begin with, you should still give the art time. That's how I feel myself. If you get confused, you just try again'.