

# Petzel

Axel Heil and Roberto Ohrt, "Asger Jorn – Biography," *Asger Jorn: The Open Hide*, exh. cat. (New York: Petzel, 2016), pp. 67-76.

## Asger Jorn – Biography



Asger Jorn on the peninsula of Himmerland, summer of 1941, photo taken in the house of P. V. Glob in Sebbesund by Erik Thommesen.



Egon Mathiesen, *Helhesten*, cover of the art magazine, vol. 1, no. 2, 1941, 9.5 × 7.2 in | 24.2 × 18.3 cm, fluid archives

On March 3, 1914, Asger Oluf Jørgensen is born in Vejrum, Denmark. He is the second child of Maren, née Nielsen, and Lars Peter Jørgensen, both of whom are teachers. His father dies young, and his mother moves with her six children to Silkeborg, a small town in the middle of Jutland. At the beginning of the 1930s, on his own initiative, Jorn begins to take classes with the painter Martin Kaalund-Jørgensen (1889–1952). At the age of nineteen, he has his first exhibition, but initially continues training to be a teacher.

In 1933–34, Jorn begins to make linocuts in the style of Feininger: simple, illustrative, and propagandistic. He is member of the Danish Communist Party, where, under the influence of Christian Christensen (1882–1960), he associates with the syndicalists. It is also Christensen who opens his eyes to the value of myth, narration, and poetry. These form the basis of Jorn's conception of himself as an artist, and of art in general: art cannot be confined to the sheltered space of the accepted canon. That's why the artistic activity of ordinary people will be also very important to him, as well as the work of despised, overlooked, and marginal figures.

1936 marks Jorn's first journey to Paris: over the next three years, until the outbreak of war in 1939, he will make several long visits there. He wants to study with Wassily Kandinsky (1866–1944), but Kandinsky has no "academy" and so Jorn ends up in the studio of Fernand Léger (1881–1955). Jorn becomes his assistant in 1937, at a time when Léger is completing a large mural for the World Expo.

For Northern Europeans above all, the French capital is associated with a seductive and carefree life. And Paris is indeed *the* laboratory of European bohemia. Here, since the end of the nineteenth century, the limitations of art have been continually superseded for expeditions into all areas of society, knowledge, and imagination. For Jorn too, the great journey to Paris marks the beginning of his "long voyage" which will take him to every part of Europe, introduce him to a life lived in many locations at once, and develop his capacity to produce art while en route. In 1939, he marries Kirsten Lyngborg.

During the Second World War Jorn has to stay in Denmark. In 1940, the German army overruns the country. Jorn joins the Resistance, and contributes in a predominantly artistic form. The most visible expression of artistic dissidence is the small magazine *Helhesten* (Horse of Hell), but Danish artists also seek, very consciously, to keep their works in public view, works no doubt regarded by the Germans as "degenerate art." They hold a large exhibition, "13 Kunstnere i Telt" ("13 Artists in a Tent," May 17–June 8, 1941) on Bellevue Beach in Copenhagen, to create a connection between art, entertainment, and propaganda.

The circle of friends associated with *Helhesten* becomes a model for a phenomenon that, in the form of the CoBrA movement (1948–51), will become significant on a European scale: the creation of a forum in which artists, scientists, writers, and architects connect each field of research and make extensions into all areas of life. In a European context, it is particularly unusual for painting to be seen as a medium of experience in its own right, and for the process of painting to be

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understood as a source of knowledge. Later, Jorn is quoted to have said that Copenhagen painters at this time went just as far as Pollock and his generation in New York.

In *Helhesten* no. 2 (1941), Jorn publishes his "Intimate Banalities." This text documents how painters independently enter theoretical debates, making use of theoretical tools supplied by painting as a medium. In the debates around kitsch and art, Jorn formulates a position diametrically opposed to the view of the American critic Clement Greenberg. However, we cannot presume that Greenberg's theses ("Avant-Garde and Kitsch," in *Partisan Review* no. 6, New York, 1939) were already known in Europe at this time.

After the war, Jorn maintains the code name he had adopted during his time with the Resistance: to him "Jorn" is more useful for the international artistic activity he is now aiming for. He starts traveling again and soon develops the idea of visiting the United States. In 1946, he again goes to Paris, where he meets the Dutch painter Constant (1920–2005), whom he visits in Amsterdam on his journey back to Copenhagen. In Brussels, Christian Dotremont (1922–1979) becomes his most important contact. The CoBrA movement will eventually emerge from the network of friends formed by Jorn in these years. Although the abbreviation draws attention to three international locations—Co(penhagen), Br(ussels), and A(msterdam)—the most important meetings take place in Paris, still the center of artist experimentation in Europe. And it is here, in the French capital, that the new artistic movement is determined to assert its independence.

In the aftermath of the war, Paris provides the best access to information about the latest trends coming from New York (the city to which Paris will lose its leading place in the art world, around 1960). The *Helhesten* group also has established contacts beyond Europe: they send a folder with magazines, photographs, drawings, and other graphic works to James Johnson Sweeney (1900–1986), curator of The Museum of Modern Art between 1935 and 1946. In Paris, the growing significance of the American scene is soon palpable: by the end of the 1940s, the first contemporary works from New York can be viewed in Paris.

The CoBrA movement presents itself in group exhibitions, which have the feel of manifestos, as well as through their journal, which—like *Helhesten* and, earlier, *Documents* and *Minotaure*—brings together a highly diverse collection of activities, research, and forms of knowledge. CoBrA gives particular significance to painting as a medium which marks a fundamental distinction from the ideas of the Surrealists. They, like Marxist theoreticians, more or less unthinkingly instrumentalize painting, a medium they see as merely "traditional." For his part, Jorn publishes writings in a number of Danish journals, working in the border zone between art, architecture, and crafts, where he begins to develop a radical critique of the foundational thinking of functionalism. In 1951, the CoBrA movement breaks up because of inner conflicts and private tensions, including a love affair between Jorn and Matie van Domselaer, Constant's wife. Jorn also suffers from a life-threatening case of tuberculosis. He is undernourished and has to spend the period



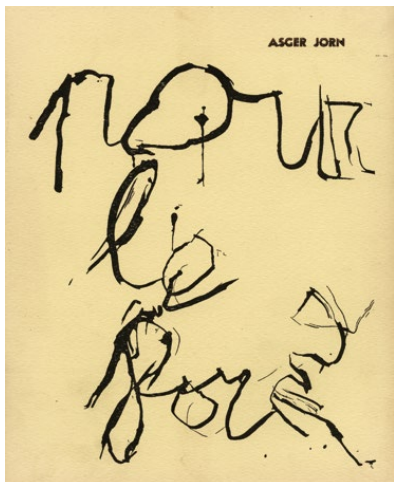
Asger Jorn, *Face*, 1942/1943, pencil on paper, 16.4 × 13.6 in | 41.5 × 34.5 cm, private collection, Paris



Asger Jorn, *Le Radeau de la méduse (The Raft of the Medusa)*, 1950, oil on hardboard, 18.5 × 23.6 in | 47 × 60 cm, private collection, Cologne

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Asger Jorn, *Pour la forme*, cover of the first edition, Paris 1957, fluid archives. (Recently a translation was published: *Concerning Form*, Silkeborg 2012)



Michèle Bernstein, Asger Jorn, Colette Gaillard and Guy Debord, *On the Passage of a Few Persons Through a Rather Brief Unity of Time*, Paris 1959, photo ca. 1958

between early 1951 and fall 1952 in a sanatorium in Silkeborg. By this time, he has separated from Kirsten Lyngborg and is living in Paris with Matie van Domselaer, in conditions of extreme poverty.

The more serious factor in CoBrA's demise is a simplistic conception of art. The group deliberately emphasizes art as a life-affirming force, set in opposition to the catastrophes of history. As an approach, this succeeds for some time, but by 1950, it is overwhelmed by the reality of the Cold War. In 1947, with the Truman Doctrine, the United States decisively takes a stand against its former ally the Soviet Union. This action establishes a strategy of tension, extending decisiveness and the application of force into American society itself. By 1950, the policy reaches Europe. Jorn paints dark and sinister portraits of a figure dedicated to death. Constant loses the cheerfulness of his colors and allows his genuine openness to deteriorate into themes of "Scorched-Earth." After his recovery from illness, Jorn again decides to go south; he first moves with his family to Switzerland, but soon goes on to northern Italy. Here, in the context of large industrial art fairs (like the Triennale di Milano), the social function of art is up for discussion. Jorn uses this public platform to speak out against functionalism. He begins with a sharp critique of the attempt by Max Bill (1908–1994) to define the idea of the Bauhaus solely in terms of functional design. Not only does Jorn emphasize the importance of painting, and the contribution of Paul Klee to the famous school of modernism, but also speaks of his own ambitions to move forward with what he calls—after Gaston Bachelard—*création ouverte* (open creation).

In 1954, Jorn founds the Bauhaus Imaginiste (also known as the International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus), to defend the significance of *images* in the development of culture. He tries to win support for his new initiative from a number of CoBrA members, like Pierre Alechinsky, and old friends from Paris, such as Roberto Matta (1911–2002). On several occasions potential collaborators join him in Albisola. Jorn has made his home in this small Italian holiday resort, west of Genoa on the Mediterranean coast, partly for the healthy climate but also because of the town's long tradition of ceramic-making. Jorn has been familiar with ceramic-making techniques since the 1930s and begins to use the Albisola workshops to promote a kind of modernist experimentation based on his experience with skilled crafts. Connecting with the young Italian artists of the Movimento Arte Nucleare, Jorn extends his critique of contemporary tendencies in abstract painting. Around this time, he begins an intense examination of the work of Jackson Pollock (1912–1956). This finds its most important expression in *Pour la Forme*: a number of texts from the mid-1950s are collected in this book, published in 1958 in the context of a new artistic organization, the Internationale Situationniste (1957–72).

At the end of 1954, Jorn discovers the journal *Potlatch*, edited by the Internationale Lettriste, a small group that emerged on the fringes of Lettrism in Paris in 1952. One of its members is Guy Debord (1931–1994), who joins Jorn as the driving force behind the foundation of the Situationist International (S.I.). The Situationists are more consistent



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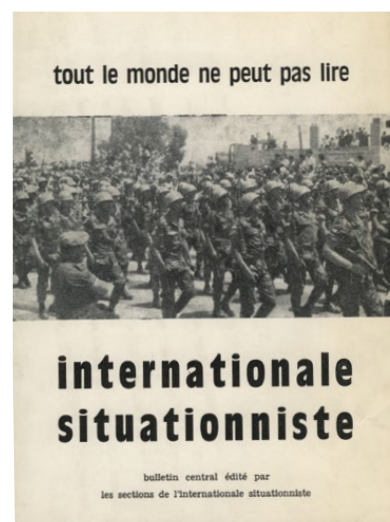
and rigorous than CoBrA. The new group extends the range and competence of artistic critique, refines a perspective based on the latest developments in industrial production, and designs a modernity of a kind no other contemporary grouping is capable of.

For Jorn, 1956 is a turning point. The years following the sanatorium were still marked by brutal poverty, but now his painting becomes more and more successful, granting him financial stability. He guarantees the independence of the Situationists and devotes himself to unusually elaborate projects: a 295 square-foot ceramic wall made for a school in Aarhus, Denmark, and a forty-six-foot-long carpet (*The Long Journey*, now in the Museum Jorn, Silkeborg, Denmark). On the "ground" of this monumental undertaking, he mocks the role of the artist, a figure increasingly presented by the mass media as a creator of unbelievable sensations and insane ideas. At first, Jorn's work seems to go along with the cheap notions of journalists, but then he turns the game into a serious demonstration of artistic freedom. He dissociates the artist from powerlessness, giving back to a ridiculed figure the capacity for initiative in a socially meaningful dimension. However, the ambitions of the S.I. demand considerable financial investment. At the beginning of the 1960s, there is discussion of building a Situationist urban area, codename "Utopolis." Jorn even finds a funder for the project—until the Situationists come up with reasons why this, too, should not get off the ground.

In 1957, Jorn buys a dilapidated building in Albisola: it is located on a hillside overlooking the town, offering marvelous sea views. In the years to come, with the help of his housekeeper, Umberto Gambetta, Jorn transforms this property step-by-step into an image of utopia, a complex and totally integrated artwork composed in the shimmering glazed surfaces of ceramics, debris, fragments, ready-made components, and his own clay sculptures, all of which are coordinated with the shifting colors of the plant world. By Situationist standards, this design for a paradise garden is probably too small, but as an artwork, it is larger than anything Jorn has ever made. But in the context of the S.I., plans that go beyond text, propaganda, or action are ruled out of actual realization.

It is no coincidence that, during his time with the Situationists, Jorn begins work on his largest canvas—*Stalingrad, le non-lieu ou le fou rire du courage* (today in Silkeborg). Here, within the context of the revolutionary organization, Jorn demonstrates how the limitless ambitions and capacities of a painter can expand in all directions. The

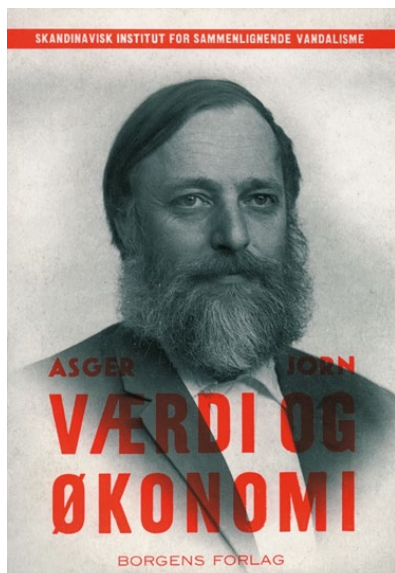
Asger Jorn and Pierre Wemaëre, *Le Long Voyage* (*The Long Journey*), detail, 1959–1960, tapestry, wool, 71.3–72.8 × 543.3 in | 181–185 × 1380 cm, Museum Jorn, Silkeborg



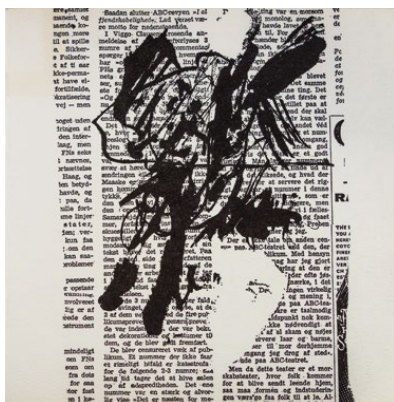
Asger Jorn, *Critique de la politique économique suivie de La lutte finale. Rapports présentés à l'internationale situationniste*, backcover (dedicated to Christian Christensen), Paris 1960

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Asger Jorn, *Værdi og økonomi* (*Value and Economy*), Institute for Comparative Vandalism, Copenhagen 1962



Cover of the catalog, *Asger Jorn*, Lefebvre Gallery, New York, Nov. 6, to Dec. 1, 1962. On the back: "First one man show in U.S.A. recent oils presented in collaboration with Jon Nicholas Streep."

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only condition of this: his ambitions must not leave the realm of the realizable. This also includes an appropriation of the roles Jorn encounters within institutions and politics: he conceives of a collection of modern art, and negotiates with the magistrate of his hometown to find a place where this collection could finally be housed (after his death, this initiative will result in the Silkeborg Art Museum, today the Museum Jorn). In a similarly easygoing manner, Jorn looks through the Situationists' bureaucratic set of definitions, then picks up on one key element—*détournement* (misappropriation). He applies this to oil painting, smothering the orderly world of Sunday painting with the specter of modernist daubing (exhibited in 1959 as *Modifications* and 1962 as *Nouvelles Défigurations*).

By the end of the 1950s, the S.I. is the most agile, inventive, and best known of the groups on the European art scene. Jorn publicizes the S.I. using every possible platform, like the ICA in London, where, during the 1950s, the idea of the *exhibition* was extended to include architecture, advertising, mass media, photography, and other popular forms of the image. Trends that would eventually lead to radical changes around 1961 in New York were in fact already under discussion at the ICA some years before. They were also present in the lavishly produced journals of the Situationists, albeit with a somewhat different perspective. In the two artists' books produced by Jorn and Debord—*Fin de Copenhague* (1957) and *Mémoires* (1958)—signs of the *old* language of the painterly (*dripping* and *paraphrase*) appear on the very same pages as signs of the new language of Pop (comic strips, advertising, industrial production). The books can thus be seen as a genuine watershed of two epochs. At the end of the 1950s, Jorn separates from Matie van Domselaer. He meets Jacqueline de Jong; they begin a relationship that will last until the late 1960s.

Jorn organizes a trip to the United States, but he is refused a visa since the American authorities have him listed as a member of the Danish Communist Party. In London, he gets to know the Dutch art dealer Jon Streep (1918–1975), who will represent him in the United States.

Although within the New York art scene itself, the days of the older generation of painters are already numbered, in Europe the heroes of Abstract Expressionism are at the high point of their acclaim. In the context of important exhibitions, Jorn tries to directly come to terms with the large formats used by the Americans: he paints *Soul for Sale* (1958–59, today in the Guggenheim Collection) for documenta II (1959). At the same time, this work is a reckoning with the Informel, the dominant style in European art at the end of the 1950s.

In 1961, the conflicts within the S.I. between "painters" and "theorists" intensify, hardening into irreconcilable oppositions and false identifications: image versus action, past versus present, tradition versus revolution. Jorn leaves the organization. He continues to support it but is no longer listed as one of its members.

In the same year, Jorn is granted membership in the Collège de Pataphysique, a secret organization formed in the spirit of Alfred Jarry, which parodies all kinds of exclusivity and scientific formalism.

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In the years that follow, Jorn defines a project that seems to create the furthest possible contrast to struggles over the society of the present and the future: *10,000 Years of Nordic Folk Art*. For documentation of an art form so profoundly removed and veiled in the mists of the past, he commissions the photographer Gérard Franceschi (1915–2001), whom he sends to remote sites all over Scandinavia and northern France. Jorn's objective is to make aspects of European culture, that had long been either systematically excluded from the canon or missed by the limited conceptions and tools of classical research, available. To realize the project, Jorn founds the Scandinavian Institute for Comparative Vandalism. Within three years the publication plan grows to twenty-eight or even thirty-two illustrated volumes; more than twenty-five thousand photographs are taken. Jorn himself only publishes two volumes; six more are published after his death.

Around this time, Jorn also increases his exhibition activity in Silkeborg, first organizing a show of international contemporary art and, after this, exhibiting the graphics of Jean Dubuffet (1901–1985). He has known the French artist since the 1940s and also experiments with him on musical projects: they work together on a music that is unlearnable and beyond all rules. For this context, Jorn turns to James Joyce's concept of "chaosmos." The recordings are released in 1961, in a boxed set containing four 10-inch records: "Musique Phénoménale."

In the same year, Jorn exhibits "Luxury Paintings" in London. In 1962 the painting *Stalingrad* travels to the Seattle World's Fair and is shown in the exhibition "Art Since 1950. American and International."

Between 1962 and 1964, Jorn publishes four theoretical books in popular paperback format. His economic texts ("Value and Economy") feature a cover photograph showing him in the dignified pose of a great scholar, like Marx, Darwin, or Freud. (see p. 71)

Jorn collaborates simultaneously with the Situationists and with the group's excluded adversaries. He publishes Debord's film scripts (*Contre le Cinéma*, Aarhus 1964, with an introduction by Jorn: "Guy Debord et le problème du maudit" / "Guy Debord and the Problem of the Accursed.") and supports Jacqueline de Jong in releasing *The Situationist Times* (a journal that resulted from a plan to create a Situationist publicity tool in the English-speaking world). Between 1962 and 1967 six editions are printed.

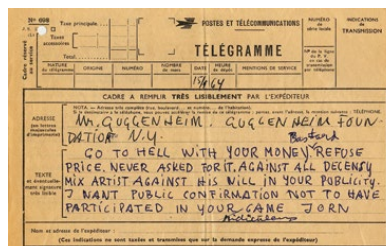
In 1964, Guy Atkins publishes the first English-language monograph on Jorn in the *Artist in Progress* series with Methuen, London.

Jorn is awarded the Guggenheim Prize in 1964, but he sends an angry telegram to Harry Guggenheim: "Go to hell with your money. Refuse price [sic]." Without Jorn's knowledge, Lawrence Alloway (1926–1990), whom he knew from the ICA in London, and Jon Streeper entered *Dead Drunk Danes* (now in The Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Denmark) into the competition. The title of this large programmatic painting is an

"allusion to Shakespeare's line 'your Dane dead drunk' from Othello [...] and] appears to be a response to a remark made by U.S. president Dwight D. Eisenhower at an address to fellow Republicans on July 27, 1960 [the year Jorn painted the picture]: Only in the last few weeks, I have been reading quite an article on the experiment of almost



Scandinavian Institute for Comparative Vandalism, Silkeborg 1965, printed photo, archive Christian Vind, Copenhagen



Jorn declines the Guggenheim Museum's International Award in 1964 | Museum Jorn, Silkeborg



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Asger Jorn, *Dead Drunk Danes*, 1960, oil on canvas, 51.2 x 78.7 in | 130 x 200 cm, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, Denmark

complete paternalism in a friendly European country. This country has a tremendous record for socialistic operation, following a socialistic philosophy, and the record shows that their rate of suicide has gone up almost unbelievably and I think they were almost the lowest nation in the world for that. Now, they have more than twice our rate. Drunkenness has gone up. Lack of ambition is discernible on all sides. Therefore, with that kind of example, let's always remember Lincoln's admonition. Let's do in the federal government only those things that people themselves cannot do at all, or cannot so well do in their individual capacities [sic]."

(Steven Harris, "How Language Looks: On Asger Jorn and Noël Arnaud's *La Langue verte*," *October* 141, Summer 2012, Massachusetts, pp. 126–127)



John Lefebvre and Asger Jorn travelling, 1969, photo: Marion Lefebvre

Scandinavians' excessive drinking habits and decline of morals were clichés with which Jorn sometimes played in his own style.

In the Guggenheim affair, which puts Jorn in the headlines in Denmark, he gives Streep the following instructions:

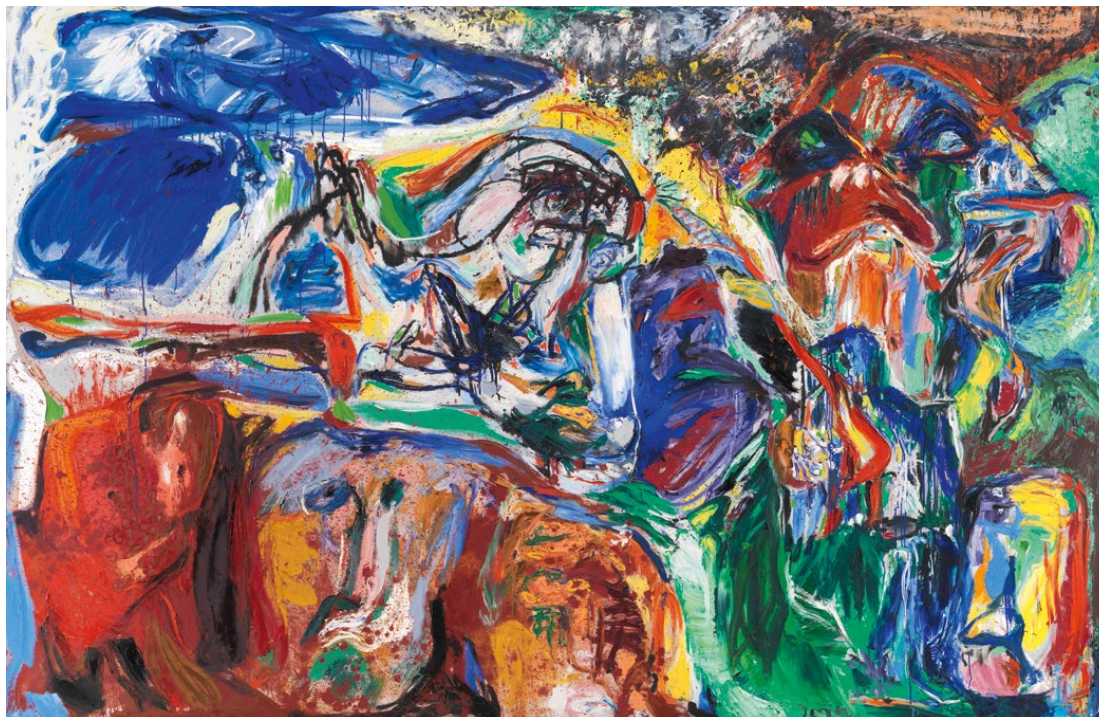
I ask you as my representant in the USA to announce that I refuse to accept any price as I ever have done. They have to give it to somebody else. I do not know for what and how I got mixed up in this affaire, but it is my opinion that there can be no unified and common judgment of two real works of art. A pricegiving is the establishment of an hierarchic distinction between artists, and I reserve my freedom to make tomorrow what will be considered as the most horrible and disgusting or superficial cheap work of art. I always refused to be placed on top of others which means that I have to take over the role of a chief. I never did it and am too lazy to find it practically and find it ridiculous to do it symbolically. I never accepted to be used as an example to artistic and public education, as I hate every sort of education en bloc. So get me distinguished from that mess please [sic]

(Andersen, Troels: *Asger Jorn. En biografi. Årene 1953–73*, Borgens Forlag, Copenhagen 1997, p. 143.)



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At this time, Jorn also buys a run-down farm on Læsø, planning to make this thinly populated and remote Baltic island, between Denmark and Sweden, into a home for his old age.

From 1962 on, Jorn is confronted in Copenhagen with public painting-happenings organized by his younger brother Jørgen Nash (1920–2004) and friends. Jorn distances himself from all such attempts to popularize (or "democratize") art through actionism. At the same time, he refuses to extend his defense of kitsch, vulgarity, banality, and diletantism to the specific area of Pop art; he also refuses to accept any suggestion that his own critical stance (toward high art) has contributed to the success of Pop.

At the beginning of 1965, Jorn travels for the first time (via Mexico) to the United States, where he ends his cooperation with Jon Streep. From now on, John Lefebvre (1905–1986), who organized Jorn's first New York exhibition in 1962, will be his American representative.

In 1965, Jorn creates another large-format, programmatic painting: *In the Beginning Was the Image* (today held in the CANICA Collection, Norway). The picture is his profession of faith. He transforms the metamorphic process of painting into a vision of creation, with colors flowing like the traces of a gaze that has become visible to itself. The painting is a dazzling manifesto of an art dedicated to extravagance and luxury, an art that knows how to get its convictions across without resorting to words or text.

Asger Jorn, *Am Anfang war das Bild (In the Beginning Was the Image)*, 1965–1966, oil on canvas, 78.7 × 118.1 in | 200 × 300 cm, Canica Art Collection (deposited at Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen)



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Asger Jorn while painting one of the large-scale murals in Havana, 1967, Calle Linea y Doce-Vedado, National Bank of Northamerica, converted into la Casa de los Manuscritos de la Revolución, photo: Raoul Corrales, Habana, Cuba



In 1966, Jorn begins to paint with acrylics, which have only recently come onto the market in Europe.

He spends the end of 1966 and beginning of 1967 in St. Gallen, Switzerland, producing a highly complex and unusually large series of lithographs for the publisher Erker Press: *From Head to Toe—Handmade Nightmare from the Holy Gall*.

Jorn visits Iceland. There he meets the Nobel Prize winner Halldór Laxness (1902–1998). In 1972, Erker Press will publish *The Bread of Life*, written by Laxness and illustrated with lithographs by Jorn. February–March 1967, Jorn has his second solo show at Lefebvre Gallery. At the end of 1967, Jorn visits Cuba to participate in an international cultural convention. He has been invited by Wilfredo Lam (1902–1982), whom he has known since 1946. Jorn stays away from a massive collective artistic demonstration (a wall painting on a large tower). Instead, he develops his own individual contribution, no less impressive in its dimensions: the painting of the Archive of Revolutionary Manuscripts. Since the early 1930s, Jorn has used walls as a medium for his art: this naturally led to making large-scale works. The Havana paintings—carried out in a former bank building, with a modern spatial structure, open on two levels—become by far his largest project, and perhaps also his most beautiful. By now, at the end of the 1960s, Jorn is painting his images with great ease; his wall paintings are as light and airy as aquarelles. On the walls of the Archive, this unforced quality becomes a kind of fluid cheerfulness, with the chirping of parrots as signs of movement between bright flowers, and the lightness of time appearing as a gift of the sun.

In 1968, social conflicts in France escalate into a general strike. In Paris, posters and graffiti on walls are a medium of rebellion. Jorn has four posters printed in his friend Peter Bramsen's lithography workshop. He plays with the broken French of a foreigner, celebrating the "Pasionate Revolution of Creativ Intelligence," and again goes against any attempt to sacrifice art to its "realization" or to "life": *Pas de*



Asger Jorn, *Invincible* (til Andersen), 1964, collage on cardboard, 13.6 × 9.8 in | 34.5 × 25 cm, private collection

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*puissance d'imagination sans images puissante*, meaning something like, "No power of imagination without powerful image" (a paraphrase of one of the most famous slogans of May '68, "*L'imagination au pouvoir*"). Jorn has already shown pictures made with torn posters at the Galerie Rive Gauche in 1963. Now, in 1968, he returns to this "technique," one used since the early 1950s by the "Affichistes" (in France: François Dufrêne, Raymond Hains, and Jacques Villeglé; in Italy: Mimmo Rotella). In contrast to these artists, Jorn turns the arbitrariness of tearing and the formless drama of anonymous destruction into a path to figuration—for the "necessity" of powerful images.

In 1970, Jorn undertakes a journey around the world, which begins with his second trip to New York, where he sees the opening of another solo exhibition at the Lefebvre Gallery. While there, he meets Nanna Enzensberger, with whom he spends his final years. From New York, Jorn travels on to Las Vegas, Denver, San Francisco, Hawaii, Kyoto, Tokyo, Hong Kong, New Delhi, and Tehran, then farther to Beirut and Baalbek. In this period, Jorn pushes painting still further in the direction of sketch-like openness, with form and color beyond safety or certainty, like a free flow of light. At the same time, he intensifies his experiments with sculpting in clay, and makes many bronzes. When the dimensions of his kiln prove to be a limit, he inquires in Carrara, the Tuscan town famous for its marble quarries, about the possibilities of sculpting with marble. His house on Læsø is now ready to move in. He spends the summer months on the island. While there, he paints the most beautiful works of his later period.

At the end of 1972 Jorn has his third solo show, also with sculptures, at Lefebvre Gallery.

Diedrich von Bern (Theodoric the Great) medieval king, and character of numerous fables becomes the main figure in his research; he completes a volume of pictures about the legendary hero, and prepares it for publication. At the end of 1972, doctors diagnose lung cancer. He undergoes treatment; it is unsuccessful.

On May 1, 1973, Jorn dies in a hospital in Aarhus, Denmark. He is buried on the island of Gotland in Sweden.

Color lithograph on the cover of the exhibition catalog *Asger Jorn in New York*, Lefebvre Gallery, Feb 21–Mar 18, 1967. Text by Lawrence Alloway



Asger Jorn, *Pas de puissance d'imagination sans images puissantes* (*No Powerful Imagination without Powerful Images*), Paris, May 1968, lithograph in colors, 19.5 × 12.4 in | 49.5 × 31.5 cm