

Petzel

For Immediate Release

ASGER JORN *The Open Hide*

May 5 – July 29, 2016

Opening reception: Thursday, May 5th, 6-8pm

Petzel Gallery is pleased to announce an exhibition of works by Danish artist Asger Jorn (1914-1973). This is the first US-based solo show dedicated exclusively to Jorn's work since an exhibition at New York's André Emmerich Gallery in 1993.

“An Asger Jorn can be garish, florid, tasteless, forced, cute, flatulent, overemphatic; it can never be vulgar.” The words of art historian T.J. Clark, writing in 1994, came two years after he commented at an art history conference that Asger Jorn was “the greatest painter of the 1950s.” Although to make this claim, Clark shifted the highpoint of Jorn's work to that decade, it remained an assertion that surprised his audience: could Jorn, a relatively unknown Dane, compete with the likes of Pollock and his American contemporaries?

It is easy to doubt Clark's statement, given the American unfamiliarity of Jorn's work: though exhibited from the 1960s at Lefebvre Gallery, until its closing in the 1980s, there has only been one retrospective of Jorn's in a major New York institution—The Guggenheim Museum, 1982-83. However Clark's judgment questions an accepted system of values entangled in cold war politics that propelled an enduring, art historical narrative that lionized the New York school of abstraction.

For Jorn, who was aligned with the CoBrA movement and later the Situationist International, art was an expression of life, of activism, of an unedited freedom not confined to studio practice. Over a diverse and multifaceted career spanning 50 years, Jorn's work attests not only to this belief, but also to a practice permeated with excesses. Notwithstanding, Jorn's association with the CoBrA movement ultimately pigeonholed the artist potentially to his detriment.

It is of course impossible for one small exhibition to move the art historical status quo; it would be equally futile to try to represent the full breadth of Asger Jorn's work with just a couple of dozen exhibits. Nevertheless *The Open Hide* is intended to be a small step in ameliorating the repressed significance of Asger Jorn. The exhibition encompasses approximately twenty works (oil on canvas, gouache on paper and lithographs) made between 1943 (“Losko”) and 1971, including examples from important series such as “Modifications,” as well as archival material. Many of these works are not only new to New York, but have not been seen in Europe for many years.

Petzel Gallery, New York, has published an accompanying catalog to this exhibition featuring over seventy-five images. *The Open Hide*, a publication edited by Roberto Ohrt and Axel Heil, features a comprehensive biography of Asger Jorn, archive material and complete provenance, exhibition and literature information.

Petzel Gallery is located at 35 East 67th Street between Park and Madison Avenues on the third floor. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday from 10:00 AM – 6:00 PM. **For press inquiries, please contact Andrew Black at andrew@petzel.com, or call (212) 680-9467.** For general inquiries, please email info@petzel.com.