

Resumés

Hanne Abildgaard: A Dialogue with Classicism Thorvaldsen and a Few Living Artists

Page 339

While earlier generations of Modernists did not appreciate Thorvaldsen, there was a renewed dialogue in the 1960s and 1970s within the Danish avant-garde concerning his work. The article highlights four artists with links to the Experimental Art School (The Eks School) and the exhibition collective Arme & Ben (Arms & Legs), each involved with Thorvaldsen in his or her own way.

In 1966, Richard Winther and Per Kirkeby were invited by the Thorvaldsen Museum to take part in a photography exhibition. Winther had taken more than 400 shots, primarily of details, mainly intending to emphasize the erotic in Thorvaldsen's art. Again in the 1970s, Winther used works by Thorvaldsen: his contribution to Arme & Ben's first exhibition, in Lucerne in 1976, included a collage with the *Swiss Lion* amorously embracing a woman.

At the same exhibition, Per Kirkeby used Thorvaldsen's works as part of an entity that played the Romantic up against the Classicistic. Much later, Thorvaldsen's *Hercules* became one of Kirkeby's fascinations, since it was part of his concept of the great classic.

Bjørn Nørgaard had a direct dialogue with Thorvaldsen in the latter half of the 1970s during his work with large tableaux, such as *Classical Tableau II* from 1976 and *Dream Castle* from 1979, both incorporating plaster versions of *Jason*. Nørgaard's main contribution to the exhibition in Lucerne in 1976 was *Thorvaldsen's Portrait Busts. Wasserspiegel*, reworkings of seven of Thorvaldsen's portrait busts, given pig's heads and the names of modern heads of state. Together with basic architectonic forms and articles from everyday life, they formed an entity with a complex statement about the role of the artist in the events of everyday life, the historical forms, and the mass-production of a glorification of power.

In the work of these three artists towards the 1980s, the interest in Thorvaldsen was part of a general preoccupation with Classicism. Ursula Reuter Christiansen was provoked by it, and in a large number of paintings, exhibited together in 1981 under the title *At Thorvaldsen's*, she worked to give the sculptures what she missed in Classicism: passion and human drama, by letting glowing colours, flowing body fluids, and an unequivocally erotic content invade the figures.