

Asger Jorn: “Blufærdig fugl” (“Bashful bird”), 1954

Asger Jorn was first and foremost a painter, but like so many other visual artists he expressed himself through a variety of media: textiles, graphics, bronze, marble and clay. He had an intuitive understanding of the characteristics of materials, and his ceramic works are certainly no exception, demonstrating his ability to release the inherent potential of the substance.

After a few initial attempts at plastic design early in his career, Jorn began working with ceramics in Sorring near Silkeborg in 1953. The year after, for practical, financial reasons, he and his family moved to Albissola on the Italian Riviera, a town with a centuries-old tradition of pottery. The craftsmanship here was characterised by a high degree of empathy and experience, and this complemented Jorn's way of working, which was primarily experimental based on sensations and improvisations. From mainly painting and processing dishes, vases and pots, Jorn moved toward freestanding ceramic sculptures and a world of wondrous, intricate creatures grew out of the clay, came to life through the firing, and became stronger in the Mediterranean sunshine.

Jorn worked with his usual vitality and intensity and, in October 1954, he confessed to Enrico Baj: “Above all, I just want to get back to painting and never touch clay again.” Fortunately, the exhaustion passed, and his crowning achievement “Det Store Relief” (“The Great Relief”) took shape in 1959, but before that we can enjoy his amazing, adventurous creations from his time in Albissola. Using his hands as his most important tool, Jorn entered into a dialogue with the clay. His polymorphic figures rarely originated from a fixed concept, and both form and perspective are not without ambiguity. Large surfaces bend willingly, and a bashful bird peers ahead. The figure evokes motion; it can be viewed from several different angles, each with its own expression; from the slightly open blue-painted beak to the dragon tail section; for an ornithologist, it must be difficult to classify the species of this creature with the parrot-like head, the big innocent eyes, the yellow plumage and the two proud, spiky toes.

“Maybe I am a nameless person trying in vain to create a persona. So, it doesn't matter what materials I work with – whether I create collages, paintings or ceramics. In everything I do, I hope only to find my own face.” (Asger Jorn – from the “Asger Jorn” brochure for the Paris exhibition at Galerie Jeanne Bucher, 1969)



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ASGER JORN

b. Vejrum 1914, d. Århus 1973

“Blufærdig fugl” (Blushing Bird), Albisola, 1954. (Free form). Unsigned. Polychrome decorated glazed earthenware. H. 36 cm. L. 50 cm.

Literature: “Asger Jorn. Keramik”, published by Silkeborg Kunstmuseum in connection with the exhibition in Silkeborg Kunstmuseum and Badisches Landesmuseum, Karlsruhe, 1991, ill. p. 90.

Literature: Ursula Lehmann-Brockhaus: “Asger Jorn i Italien. Værker i keramik, bronze og marmor 1954-1972”, published by Silkeborg Kunstmuseum in connection with the exhibition in Silkeborg Kunstmuseum, Museum Villa Stuck, München and Kunsthalle in Emden, 2007, ill. 73, ill. p. 69.

Exhibited: “Asger Jorn Keramik”, Kunstindustrimuseet, Copenhagen, 1955, cat. no. 15, ill. in the catalogue.

Provenance: Architect Robert Dahlmann Olsen. Thence by descent in the family.

DKK 150,000–200,000 / € 20,000–27,000