

As the s bursts t

Art of the Faroe Islands

14.01.2022-13.03.2022

Le Bicolore



Rannvá Kunoy
Untitled, 2021
Pigments, acrylic and dispersion on linen
230 x 140 cm
Photo Ben Westoby



Introduction

Probably because, for centuries, their position on the fringe of the north Atlantic kept them relatively isolated, on the Faroe Islands, age-old customs have remained living traditions. Faroese society blends traditional and contemporary culture in a way that is both distinctive and unique. As a result, the Faroe Islanders are at once a cohesive local community and an open-minded, globalized Nordic nation. Faroese contemporary art is firmly rooted in an unusual cultural heritage shaped by the living conditions and natural setting of these northern latitudes. Yet through the ages, in every period, the Faroese have largely welcomed movements and inspirations from elsewhere and in particular from France.

The exhibition title alludes to a canticle by the baroque Danish poet Thomas Kingo (1634-1703), *Som den gyldne sol frembryder* (As the golden sun bursts through), which refers to the sun piercing pitch-dark clouds. Kingo's collection of hymns is of especial historical importance in the Faroe Islands, where it was for many years the main hymnal used. The hymns were sung not only in churches and at ceremonies, but by fishermen and other Faroe Islanders as they went about their everyday activities. The term "Kingo-singing" is used to refer to a strong Faroese tradition of folk singing unaccompanied by musical instruments, in which melodies vary widely from village to village and even from singer to singer.

Through the artworks of four Faroese painters, the exhibition “As the sun bursts through” considers Faroese art from the standpoint of treatments of light in contemporary and more traditional schools of painting, from post-Impressionist interpretations of natural light to flat blocks of pure colour in abstract art, and pictures that themselves seem to capture and reflect light.

Light has played an essential role in Faroese art ever since its tardy beginnings in the early 20th century. From the very first depictions of landscapes, painted by self-taught artists and tinged with romantic nationalism, Faroese art has been bathed in light. That is hardly surprising, given the natural setting of the Faroes and their geographical location close to the Arctic Circle. But the bright light and vibrant colours typical of Faroese painting also stem from the French art the painters learned about at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts.

In Listasavn Føroya (the National Gallery of the Faroe Islands), the influence of artists such as Cézanne, Matisse, Picasso, Braque and Monet is immediately obvious. The city of Paris itself, as the centre and birthplace of the modern art movements, also played a prominent role in the history of Faroese art. Despite the Faroes’ rich cultural life, there has never been an academy of fine arts on the islands, so Faroese painters and sculptors have traditionally gone abroad to study. The first generations of artists mostly trained at the Royal

Danish Academy of Fine Arts. While studying there, they began to take an interest in Paris, where their teachers and other Danish artists used to make pilgrimages to study the French artists they sought to emulate. One of these teachers was Professor Aksel Jørgensen, who developed the theoretical underpinnings of colourist painting using flat blocks of colour, inspired by Impressionism and especially the ideas of Paul Cézanne. Colourism had a huge influence on emerging Faroese art, and forms the basis of the dazzling use of colour that is a strong element of contemporary Faroese painting.

Biographies of the artists

Ingálvur av Reyni

Ingálvur av Reyni lived in Tórshavn from 1920 to 2005. During his lifetime, he was already one of the most celebrated painters in the Faroes, and his pre-eminence has become even more firmly established since his death. In addition to his paintings, he produced countless drawings in the Faroes and on his many trips abroad. He studied art in Copenhagen, first at Bizzie Høyers' art school, from 1938 to 1942, then at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, where his teachers included Kræsten Iversen and Aksel Jørgensen, from 1942 to 1945. He went to Paris for the first time in 1958. His many subsequent visits there included several prolonged stays, which had a great impact on him, by his own account. There have been exhibitions of his work in the Faroes and in Denmark. In 1992, Bornholm Art Museum held the first major Ingálvur av Reyni retrospective. A further retrospective was held at Randers Museum of Art in 1998. Ingálvur av Reyni was awarded the Eckersberg Medal in 1986 and the Faroese Cultural Prize and the Thorvaldsen Medal in 2000. Also in 2000, Listasavn Føroya mounted a large-scale exhibition for the artist's 80th birthday, and in 2002, he produced a vast, majestic painting for the Lagting (the Faroese legislative assembly), which still forms the backdrop for all the debates held in the assembly.

Zacharias Heinesen

Zacharias Heinesen is a central figure in Faroese pictorial art. He was born in 1936, in Tórshavn, where he lives and works - and runs Williamshús, the William Heinesen Museum and artists' retreat, in the house where he grew up. He trained at the Reykjavík School of Visual Arts (1957-1958) then at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen (1959-1963), but he had been moving in Faroese artistic circles since his youth and had worked as his father's assistant on several large decorative artworks. Zacharias Heinesen made his artistic debut in the 1951 edition of Ólavsøkuframsýningin, the annual national holiday exhibition at Listasavn Føroya, in Tórshavn, in which he has exhibited almost every year since. He first had work in the Copenhagen Autumn Art Exhibition in 1960. Since then, he has taken part in innumerable group exhibitions including at Listasafn Íslands in Reykjavík (1961), at Bergens Kunstforening (1970), at Galleri Gammel Strand in Copenhagen (1971), at Lerwick (1971), at Den Nordiske in Copenhagen (1983-1985), at Vrå-udstillingen (1984), at Huset in Asnæs (1989), at Giart Göteborg (1989), at Galleri Borg in Reykjavík (1993), at Kjarvalstaðir in Reykjavík (1998), at Den Frie Udstillingsbygning in Copenhagen (2004), at Hafnaborg in Hafnafjørður (2005), at Steinprent in Tórshavn on several occasions, and at Gamla Seglhúsið in Klaksvík. Listasavn Føroya held solo exhibitions of his work in

1973 and 2016, and there were further solo exhibitions at Union de Banques à Paris in 1986, at Mikkjelberg, in Germany, in 1992, and at Nordatlantens Brygge in Copenhagen in 2007. Examples of his many decorative works can be seen at Husum church, the Eastern High Court of Denmark, the school Eysturskúlin, the Hotel Føroyar and the retirement home Láargarður, and several of his watercolours feature on Faroese banknotes. He was an artist in residence at the Cité des Arts in Paris in 1973 and 2002 and at Hafnaborg in 2009. In 2015, he founded Williamshús, in Tórshavn, in memory of his father, the painter and writer William Heinesen. Zacharias Heinesen received the Henry Heerup prize in 1986, and was awarded the Faroese Cultural Prize in 2006.

Hansina Iversen

Hansina Iversen is primarily a non-figurative painter. She was born in Tórshavn in 1966 and studied at Myndlista- og Handiðaskóla Íslands in Reykjavík from 1989 to 1993, then at the Academy of Fine Arts in Helsinki from 1993 to 1997. After completing her studies, she moved to Copenhagen, where she worked until 2011, then to Tórshavn, which is now her main home. Hansina Iversen's work has been widely exhibited in the Faroes and elsewhere. There were solo exhibitions of her work at Listasavn Føroya in 2003 and 2014 and at Nordatlantens Brygge in Copenhagen in 2016, and she had a joint exhibition with Jóhan Martin Christiansen at Møstings Hus in Copenhagen in 2020. As well as painting in oils, Hansina Iversen works with the lithographer Jan Andersson and the graphic artist Friða Matras Brekku at Steinprent, a major Faroese lithographic workshop. Hansina Iversen produced a decorative artwork for the facade of the Faroese Lagting (legislative assembly) in Tórshavn in 2006, and was awarded a three-year grant by the Faroese Culture Foundation in 2018.

Rannvá Kunoy

Rannvá Kunoy was born in Tórshavn in 1975 and now lives and works in London. She is chiefly a painter, but sometimes switches medium to lithography. Her artworks, which are often huge, focus on the formal characteristics of painting and how they are perceived. She explores these issues by creating effects of depth in various ways, lending the surface of the picture an elusive appearance of three-dimensionality. Rannvá Kunoy graduated from the Royal College of Art in London in 2001. She was awarded a three-year grant by the Mentanargrunnur Landsins foundation in 2003 and received a grant from the Danish art foundation Niels Wessel Bagges Kunstfond in 2004. Her work has been shown at the David Risley Gallery in Copenhagen (2011), at the Lundgren Gallery in Majorca (2015), at viennacontemporary (2016), at Rønnebæksholm in Næstved (2018), at the Saatchi Gallery in London (2018), at Nordatlantens Brygge in Copenhagen (2020), in the Republic of Korea (2021) and in Tokyo (2021). She has had solo exhibitions at the Galerie Diana Stigter in Amsterdam (2007), at Nordens Hus in Tórshavn (2010), at the Centre PasquArt in Biel (2015), at the Lundgren Gallery in Mallorca (2016 and 2020) and the Nathalie Karg Gallery in New York (2021), among others. She has works in numerous collections and several of her pictures hang in the new school building Glasir Tórshavn College.

Kinna Poulsen

Kinna Poulsen is an art critic and curator who lives and works in Tórshavn. She has degrees in Danish and History of Art, and has written a number of books on art in Faroese. She has organized and curated many exhibitions in the Faroes and elsewhere, including a Rannvá Kunoy exhibition at Nordens Hus in 2010, a Hanni Bjarðalíð exhibition at Steinprent in 2010, Claus Carstensen exhibitions at Nordens Hus in Tórshavn in 2011 and at Nordatlantens Brygge in 2013, a Tóroddur Poulsen exhibition at Steinprent in 2017, a Randi Samsonsen exhibition at Steinprent in 2018, a Silja Strøm exhibition at Víngarðurin in 2020, and a Jóhan Martin Christiansen exhibition at Steinprent in 2021. Her books include *Steffan Danielsen* (2009), *Rannvá Kunoy* (2010), *Øssur Johannessen* (2012) and *Tóroddur Poulsen* (2017), and since 1997, she has been a contributor to a range of media, journals and catalogues on art- and literature-related topics as well as writing for her own arts website lista-portal.com. She is a board member of the International Association of Art Critics (AICA) Denmark.

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