

As the sun bursts through

**A conversation
between
Hansina Iversen
and Kinna Poulsen**

Le Bicolore

**Maison du
Danemark**

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Hansina Iversen's new studio is in Østrøm, an old factory in central Tórshavn, near the marina, that is now a modern arts hub. Among others, Østrøm is home to the major Faroese lithographic workshop and art gallery Steinprent, a design shop and a music studio where artists such as Eivør and Teitur have recorded. Hansina's studio has a superb view of Tórshavn's harbour, church tower and old quarters, but she doesn't yet feel quite at home there, whether because she misses the many books that are still in her other studio, or for some other reason. However, music is a constant: on the afternoon when I visited her, wonderful piano pieces, probably Beethoven, were coming from the speakers, the exhibition was coming along splendidly, and we talked about all kinds of things, including Paris. On the wall were two large paintings in dazzlingly bright colours scheduled to be exhibited at Le Bicolore. I began by asking Hansina about titles.

Kinna Poulsen: Although formally your paintings don't have titles, your recent works have a kind of shared title, "To Interrupt The Line", which I know you've been working on for some time and which was used as the name of your last exhibition. Could you talk a bit about that and explain how you work?

Hansina Iversen: Each individual picture doesn't have a title. Most of the time, I work on several pictures at once, for varying lengths of time. Then, when they're finished and I need to choose from among them for an exhibition, I give them an overall title – a kind of heading that also furnishes the title of the exhibition and refers to a kind of coherence between the artworks. The title "To Interrupt The Line" was for a series of pictures painted last year, some of which will be in the exhibition "As the sun bursts through". I work very meticulously, in a way that is both controlled and spontaneous. The pictures contain several layers. Each layer is dry before the next is applied. So although I paint in oils, the colours overlap without mixing. The mixture of colours and the shapes overlap, forming new colours and new shapes. When several layers have been applied, you can still make out the lay-

ers underneath – the lines are interrupted but you can sense a line continuing somewhere beneath the surface. In doing so, I hope to create a movement within the picture – and also a depth. The picture always includes apertures that reveal the very first layer.

Kinna Poulsen: How do you feel about the concept of a group exhibition in Paris with three of your Faroese colleagues? What do you think of the choice of art works and the mixture of figurative and abstract? Can the exhibition be representative of the painting of the Faroes?

Hansina Iversen: Yes, I think so. The mere fact that all four of us come from the Faroes implies that through our art works, we represent Faroese pictorial art. In fact, it's widely represented, because we belong to several generations spanning from the middle of the last century to the present. Combining abstract and figurative art doesn't accentuate a divide between us. What's more interesting is what connects us – to my mind, the colours, light and the atmosphere of our pictures.

Kinna Poulsen: At first sight, Ingálvur av Reyni's complementary studies of the angle of light in pictures from the 1940s and 1950s are quite a long way from your flat blocks of pure colours and brush-strokes, but I think people will feel there is a coherence when they see them together. At least, I hope so. From an art history standpoint, there is a link between the two of you, because you're both sort of pioneers of abstract art in the Faroes.

Hansina Iversen: Ingálvur's paintings have always fascinated me. His abstract works, with their highly expressive strokes, sometimes becoming almost explosive, tell us that here we have an artist who passionately wants to express something meaningful. In the film *Svartur sannleiki*, we see Ingálv painting in his studio. It's as if he were engaging in a highly animated dialogue with his pictures. The whole process is very intense and laden with meaning. His oeuvre has greatly influenced Faroese art. The same goes for Zacharias Heinesen's landscapes. He has invented a method in which he disperses the landscape all over the surface of the picture in little rectangular dots, so that the subject seems to sparkle like the natural setting of the Faroes just after rain, when sunbeams suddenly pierce the clouds and the dazzling light reflects off all the wind-ruffled wet surfaces.

Kinna Poulsen: Faroese art has come to be defined rather narrowly, especially in overseas exhibitions, because they have focused on landscape painting. Partly as a

result of this, the art of the Faroes has been pigeonholed in a way that has not been beneficial. I imagine that, as a non-figurative Faroese artist, you have also encountered prejudice both on and off the Faroe Islands...

Hansina Iversen: As a child, I think I was already more interested how a picture was painted than in its subject. When I realised that I wanted to study fine art, I remember not wanting to study in Denmark because I wanted to get away from the very set idea of Faroe Islanders and Faroese art. I wasn't interested in landscapes. When I was a child, I remember I used to ask my mother to draw totally random lines on a sheet of paper, and I would build an entire composition by colouring in the shapes. Those little drawings looked a bit like Robert Delaunay's pictures from the 1930s. I had a lot of fun doing them, and the thing I found most fascinating was that I myself hadn't chosen how the picture should begin, but I ended up with a composition consisting of colours over a predefined line. That's still a bit what I do, except that it isn't my mother who draws the lines to start with. I've become more self-sufficient. But I prefer not to know what I'm going to do. It's the process that decides what happens next after each of the layers I use to build up a whole.

Kinna Poulsen: The title of the exhibition refers to one of Thomas Kingo's poems, which begins: "As the golden sun bursts through the pitch-dark clouds..." I see parallels between some contemporary art and the baroque in the way they depict con-

tracts and the fleeting nature of existence. A sunbeam piercing the gloom expresses both those things. For instance, in my view, your and Rannvá Kunoy's pictures, which are bursting with glorious colour, can be viewed as baroque *memento mori* in which we have a sense of the imminence of death and darkness when the splendour is at its height. At first sight, your paintings appear to be non-figurative, but for a lot of people, they have highly sensual associations. These are things they see in them. I find it interesting that these pictures seem to be simultaneously directed towards a defined goal and totally abstract and open.

Hansina Iversen: Hmm... The thing is, I'd like to put everything in them – all the pleasure of life and the whole truth, no less! One can at least try. It stems from the use of strong colours: they influence us. And although the shapes are initially intended to be unrecognisable, as viewers we always endeavour to recognise something in them. It reassures us. That's why my pictures don't have titles. Viewers can find titles themselves and give their own meanings to the pictures. They have to be present, including physically and not just in thought or the brain. Perhaps that's where the baroque comes in - in the need to come to terms with life on Earth or the limits of physical life. As a result, it becomes especially important to find a greater, more beautiful meaning in the limited time we spend on Earth.

Time has slipped away, and the light is now blue. Dusk envelops Tórshavn. Our studio

conversation has faded into silence. In the distance, we hear church bells ringing, bringing us back to reality and reminding us it is time to go our separate ways - out into the city and home to make supper.



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