



Danish Arts
Foundation

ART IN EMBASSY

Danish contemporary art, craft
and design in selected embassies





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CONTEMPORARY ART IN EMBASSY

Diplomacy with character

A bench inspired by a spine and a large porcelain dog missing part of its nose. A bright blue beach toy whale in glass and a TV sawn horizontally in half. A pair of down-at-heel porcelain sneakers and a hat rack painted red-and-white, like barrier tape. These are some of the surprising works of art that are included in a presentation of contemporary art and design in the interior decoration of the Danish embassies in London, Tokyo and Washington.

The goal was to use contemporary art and design to revitalize the decor of the official rooms in the three embassies while promoting a contemporary image of Denmark that emphasizes innovation and creativity. The embassies applied for funding to the Danish Arts Foundation and the International Culture Panel, a cross-ministerial collaboration between the Danish Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Culture. The result was the pilot project 'Art in Embassy' with three separate embassy partnerships in 2016–2019.

In London, Tokyo and Washington, we aim to show that Danish art and design are in continued development – and that we may be headed for a new golden age of Danish design.

The present publication outlines the ideas behind the project, presents the individual pieces and offers an impression of what the embassies have done with the new works of art and design.

DANISH ART CREATES A PLATFORM TO PRESENT OUR CAPACITY FOR CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION. IN THIS WAY, DESIGN AND ART CAN SUPPORT THE PROFILING OF DENMARK IN KEY AREAS, INCLUDING SUSTAINABILITY, AND PROMOTE EXPORTS OF DANISH SOLUTIONS.

*Lars Lose, former Danish
ambassador to the United States*

Why contemporary art and design in embassies?

All three embassies occupy unique architectural settings. Each in their way, the buildings represent aspects of the simple modernist expression that has been such a strong brand for Denmark since the 1960s.

In Washington, DC, Wilhelm Lauritzen created the coherent embassy building design in 1960, while the Danish embassy in London was designed by Arne Jacobsen (completed by Dissing & Weitling in 1977). The Danish embassy in Tokyo, which has been in use since 1979, was designed by the world-renowned Japanese architect Fumihiko Maki. With its Japanese origin, the building reflects related values and expressions in the two countries' approach to form and design.

OUR EMBASSIES ARE IMPORTANT WINDOWS TO THE WORLD, AND IN THIS SETTING, ART CAN CONVEY A CONTEMPORARY IMAGE OF DENMARK. THE WORKS ALSO SHOWCASE DANISH CULTURAL POLICY AND OUR ART FUNDING SYSTEM, WHICH IS FAIRLY UNIQUE IN AN INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT.

*Søren Thaaning, former chairperson of
the Danish Arts Foundation's Committee
for Visual Arts*

JACOBSEN'S LEGACY IN THE DANISH EMBASSY IN LONDON

The iconic Danish architect Arne Jacobsen's embassy building in London forms a great setting for art. The Danish Arts Foundation curated the art for the rooms, and the result is a wide range of contemporary pieces that inspire dialogue and spark curiosity among the many visitors to the embassy.

The Danish Embassy in London

The selected works of art speak directly to the senses and offer a myriad of materials and techniques to explore: sculptural benches and chests of drawers. A table that mirrors the city. A sculptural creature on a human scale. Reinterpreted landscape paintings and a porcelain dog with a gaping hole. The Danish designer Ole Wanscher's simple dining room suite is a beautiful match for the setting. Consistent with this, the selection and placement of the artworks deliberately aimed for an interplay between the existing decor and the contemporary expression. The design selection in particular aimed to present pieces that would match Jacobsen's legacy. Some of the embassy's superb older pieces have been included in the new decor. This includes Laurits Tuxen's 'The Coronation of Queen Alexandra' and

'Queen Victoria and Her Family at Windsor Castle'. Since both paintings reflect the unique history between the two nations, they were regarded as essential to preserve in this particular location.

THERE IS SUCH VARIETY IN THE ART DISPLAYED, RANGING FROM THE INTRICATE AND MODEST TO THE IMPOSING, FROM THE FAMILIAR TO THE NEW AND SURPRISING. AS A RESULT, YOU NEVER GET THE SAME REACTION FROM GUESTS AT THE RESIDENCE, BUT YOU ALWAYS GET A REACTION!

*Rasmus Leth Traberg, sector expert,
Trade Council, London*

The Ambassador's comment on the project:
Most of the 3,000 or so guests we welcome to the embassy every year don't come here for an art experience, but it is an important aspect of the overall impression that the rooms and the art make an impact. The immediate reactions to the works of art range from deep appreciation and curiosity to head-shaking!

In particular, our guests notice the harmony in the presentation of the works of art and the colour coordination in the three-room suite, which they notice as soon as they step out of the lift.

*Lars Thuesen, the Danish Ambassador
to the United Kingdom in London*



Søren Martinsen 'Harvested Field' 2017 combined with the 'Repetition Bench' 2012 by Thomsen & Kjeldtoft.
Photo: Elizabeth Frey



Nina Beier 'China' 2015. Photo: Elizabeth Frey



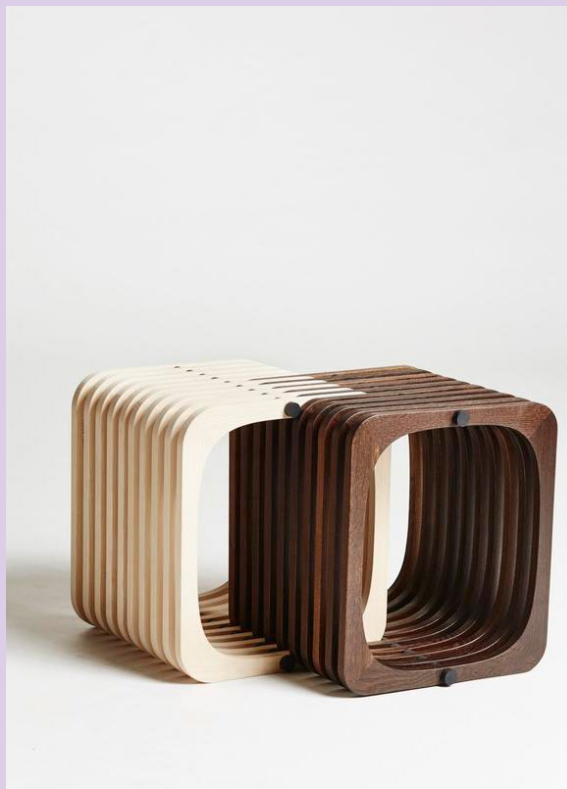
Work by Lea Guldditte Hestelund, 2017. Photo: Elizabeth Frey



Chairs by Dan Svarth, 2017. Photo: Elizabeth Frey



Work by Lea Guldditte Hestelund, 2017. Photo: Elizabeth Frey



The repetition bench is made of oak and smoked oak.
Photos: The Danish Arts Foundation's archives



Photo: Elizabeth Frey

Henrik Sørig Thomsen / Gert Kjeldtoft
Oak and smoked oak, 2012

REPETITION BENCH

Guests to the London embassy encounter Henrik Sørig Thomsen and Gert Kjeldtoft's sculptural seating furniture upon arrival in the entrance hall.

The inspiration for the bench is the human spine, the cylindrical connectors resembling the discs of the spine. The pieces can be freely shaped and coupled together, extended and varied and offer a flexible element to match varying events at the residence.

THE ARTWORKS SERVE AS A PLATFORM FOR STORYTELLING ABOUT DENMARK, NOT JUST ABOUT DANISH ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN BUT A HOST OF TOPICS, INCLUDING SUSTAINABILITY AND THE GREEN TRANSITION - ALL TOPICS WE ARE KEEN TO DISCUSS WITH OUR BRITISH GUESTS.

*Rasmus Leth Traberg,
sector expert, Trade Council, London*



Photo: Anders Sune Berg



The painting 'Harvested Field' hangs in the dining room but catches the eye from the entrance hall when guests arrive at the residence.
Photo: Elizabeth Frey

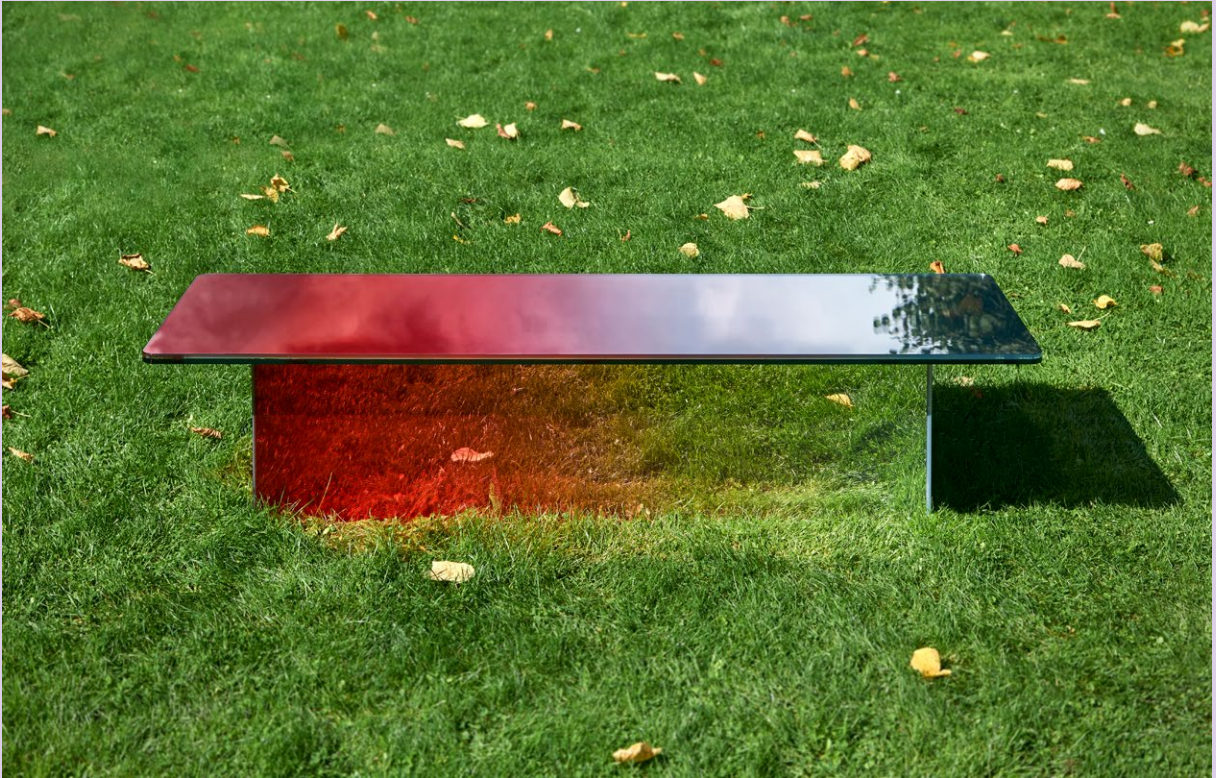
Søren Martinsen
Oil on canvas , 2017

HARVESTED FIELD

Søren Martinsen's painting gives classic landscape art a new expression. Martinsen is fascinated with the balance between the spatial and recognizable qualities of the figurative image and the abstract, formal qualities of all the human-made technological elements in nature and the details that dissolve into abstraction. The works of art throughout the embassy offer an impression of the different ways in which talented contemporary artists address nature as image and theme.

I SEE THE WORLD AS COMPLETELY DOMINATED BY THE HUMAN SUBJUGATION OF NATURE. IN THIS PAINTING I TRY TO SHOW THE SLIGHTLY ABSURD BUT ALSO AESTHETICALLY FASCINATING RESULT OF OUR USE OF MACHINES TO TRANSFORM THE PLANTS IN THE FIELD INTO PRECISE AND UNIFORM CUBES.

Søren Martinsen.



Two layers of hardened laminated mirror glass gradually transitioning to red glass. The frame has interior supports made of waterproof plywood sheets. Photo: Iskos-Berlin



Photo: Elizabeth Frey

Iskos-Berlin

Hardened laminated glass, 2017

PRESENCE / ABSENCE

The piece on the patio acts as a sculptural as well as functional element. Depending on one's vantage point, it mirrors the city, the sky or the building. Presence/ Absence can be used as a bench or a table, depending on its placement.

To the designers, the piece is a study of an archetypal furniture form manifested in an untraditional material and an untraditional technology. In a comment on the title, the designers say:

We understand the meaning of light when it grows dark; we first understand what our parents meant to us when they are gone; the presence of loved ones is truly grasped in their absence. Presence and absence walk together, as inseparable as day and night ...

IT IS INTERESTING TO OBSERVE THE MANY DIFFERENT REACTIONS TO THE ART. OFTEN, PEOPLE ARE TOO POLITE TO SAY ANYTHING AT FIRST, BUT AS SOON AS WE BRING IT UP, THEY ARE HAPPY TO HAVE A CONVERSATION ABOUT IT. IT'S CLEAR THAT THE WORKS ARE MAKING AN IMPRESSION ON THE GUESTS.

*Ilana Krasnik, export advisor,
Trade Council, London*



Plaster and granite are both traditional materials in sculptures – but not in the same piece. This unusual combination gives rise to a dialogue between the fragile, delicate white plaster and the weight of the granite it balances on in 'Planet Sunday'.
Photo: Jan Søndergaard.



Photo: Elizabeth Frey

Rikard Thamberts

Plaster, steel, granite, 2016

PLANET SUNDAY

Sitting in the sofa in the first living room, one is in the company of a sculptural creature on a human scale that might evoke the image of a giant seahorse. Indeed, its form is inspired by a seahorse sculpture that stood close to the artist's childhood home.

While Sørensen's 'Harvested Field' shows nature edited by humanity, this sculptural creature represents inspiration from the sea feeding the human imagination. With its size and organic shape, it reinterprets a 20th century sculpture tradition that we see represented both in the public space and in landscaped sculpture gardens – in England represented especially by the works of Henry Moore.

MY WORK OFTEN ADDRESSES THE NOTION OF A MUSEUM FOR THE IMAGINATION. THE PIECE IS BASED ON A HOLISTIC IDEA, WHERE THE SCULPTURE SHARES ITS EXPRESSION, PROCESS AND MOOD WITH A LARGE GROUP OF ARTWORKS CREATED DURING THE SAME TIME.

Rikard Thamberts



The 'bites' reveal the insides of the objects; the dog loses its 3D illusion, and the vase loses its original function as a vase.
Photo: Joachim Schulz



Photo: Elizabeth Frey.

Nina Beier

Hand-painted porcelain vase and dog, 2015

CHINA

The vase is missing a bite, and the dog is missing part of its nose. Did the dog take a bit out of the vase? And what happened to the dog's nose?

Beier's pieces originate from clear signs most of us will recognize – as a dog and a vase – but manipulates and juxtaposes these objects to tell new, unanticipated stories that often have a slightly comical, humorous twist.

IT'S NOT HARD TO STRIKE UP CONVERSATION WHEN YOU ARE STANDING NEXT TO SOMEONE LOOKING AT A PORCELAIN DOG THAT IS MISSING PART OF ITS NOSE AND HAS SEEMINGLY JUST TAKEN A BITE OF A CHINESE VASE.

*Rasmus Leth Traberg, sector expert,
Trade Council, London*



Photo: Elizabeth Frey



The house lies 'on the edge' and suggests an opening towards the infinity of nature that is also part of early modernist architecture.
Photo: Anders Sune Berg

Asmund Havsteen Mikkelsen
Oil on canvas, 2018

SECLUSION

In the modernist grid structure of the window and with London's colourful roofscape as a backdrop stands a small painting. It shows a bungalow that the architect Berthold Lubetkin built for himself in the middle of nature in the south of England during the 1930s.

The picture is a form of archaeological study of our own historical origins and the architectural settings we understand ourselves through. The artist is interested in early modernist architecture and its relationship to utopias, abstract art and the new possibilities that industrialization afforded modern human beings.

NOT ONLY IS IT A USEFUL CONVERSATION POINT AT MEETINGS; THE EMBASSY AS A PLATFORM IS A BRILLIANT WAY TO HIGHLIGHT DANISH CULTURE TO THE MANY PEOPLE VISITING EVERY YEAR. A LIVING MUSEUM OF MODERN DANISH ART, IN A WAY.

*Ilana Krasnik, export advisor,
Trade Council, London*



Photo: The Danish Arts Foundation's archives



Photo: Elizabeth Frey

Maria Sparre-Petersen
Glass, 2016

EPISTEMIC ARTEFACTS

Placed in the window sill under 'Seclusion' are two pieces of glass art, 'Epistemic Artefacts' by Maria Sparre-Petersen.

Sparre-Petersen has a strong focus on sustainability and how we can rethink materials and transfer them from one context to another. The piece was part of the artist's PhD study of sustainable development of glass, crafts and design.

The title, 'Epistemic Artefacts' describes a knowledge-bearing outcome of an aesthetic and materials-driven study. Thus, the glass sculptures manifest unseen stories from the material's former function a new form.

IN THE PROJECT I EXPLORED THE POSSIBILITIES FOR AESTHETIC INNOVATION WITHIN THE TRANSITION FROM USING VIRGIN RAW MATERIALS TO USING RECYCLED CONTAINER GLASS IN PRODUCTION PROCESSES.

Maria Sparre-Petersen

ART IN DIALOGUE WITH ARCHITECTURE AT THE EMBASSY IN TOKYO

With the celebration of the 150th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Denmark and Japan, the Danish Embassy in Tokyo reached out to loan works of art from the Danish Arts Foundation's collection for the residence in Tokyo.

The Danish Embassy in Tokyo

Many of the pieces selected for the Tokyo embassy have an experimental, playful and explorative quality. The selection only includes one traditional painting; instead, the artists express themselves in untraditional ways, such as aluminium reliefs, a large ink-on-paper fan, a glass beach toy and everyday objects cut in half. The curated selection also includes more classic media such as print, photography, collage, textile and ceramic sculpture.

The selection aimed to emphasize the overall visual impression. Thus, the art strikes a common note throughout the building, highlighting

the unique character of each room and engaging in a common dialogue that offers a coherent experience as the viewer moves around or looks from one room into the next. In their placement, the pieces also engage in a conversation with the architecture, for example the traditional Japanese grid patterns in windows and doors.

In order to bring a calm ambience to the house and rooms, the pieces are generally in muted colours with an emphasis on materials and textures. The pauses between the pieces create a space *around* the art and thus an enhanced focus on the art.

In the passage from the entrance hall to living room hangs Sharon Fisher's Ikat Bane (Ikat Length) (1989) – an almost three-metre-long woven silk textile in yellow, black and white, its dimensions underscoring the soaring ceiling height by the stair leading up to the private residence. Ikat Bane is combined with Laptop Table (2016) by Mikkel Vandborg / Design by Dane. Both the table and the stool relate to Maki's ambition of simple, functional and minimalist architecture. Photo: Steffen Kloster Poulsen





Ellen Hyllemose collage 2016 in the hall. Photos: Steffen Kloster Poulsen.



Steen Ipsen's sculpture "Tied Up" and Lene Adlers painting "The author Karen Blixen" in the living room of the embassy.



Steen Ipsen's sculpture 'Tied Up 15/2017'. Steen Ipsen is an exponent of new Danish ceramic art with a practice positioned at the intersection of design and visual art. In this piece, he has joined ceramic balls together to create an organic form. The glaze lends the ceramic material a sensory appeal and an almost industrial look, even though it is in fact a unique hand-crafted piece. The ceramic balls are tied together with plastic string, which adds contrast and ornamentation to the form. Photo: Steffen Kloster Poulsen



Lene Adler Petersen's painting 'Forfatteren Karen Blixen' (The Writer Karen Blixen) is an abstract portrait of one of Denmark's most acclaimed writers ever. The painting is part of Adler Petersen's series 'Persona', the title a reference to the Swiss psychiatrist C. G. Jung's concept of a social mask that the psyche presents to the world. Photo: The Danish Arts Foundation's archives



'Dark Core' and 'Lapis' are made of paper that has taken on a new expression after 100–200 applications of ink. Photo: Marie Kirkegaard Gallery



Photo: Steffen Kloster Poulsen

Johanne Skov Lasgaard
Ink on paper, 2016

"DARK CORE" AND "LAPIS"

Entering the living room, one encounters two large pieces by Skovbo Lasgaard alongside furniture classics by Finn Juhl.

Lasgaard is interested in the transformation of materials. On one side, the paper artworks are monochrome, while the other side contains a wide range of colour shades in blue and violet scales.

In Lasgaard's works, form and material are conceived as a means of triggering the viewer's personal images, recollections and memories. Folding gives the paper a sculptural expression and brings Japanese paper fans and blinds to mind.

**ALL MY MEMORIES ARE BURNED
DOWN, IN CLAY, IN SILVER, ALL MY
MEMORIES ARE IN THE BLOOD. THE
PAPERWORK DARK CORE AND LAPIS
ARE PREPARED AS PART OF THE EXHI-
BITION HAZY MEMORY POOL (II). THE
HAZY PUDDLE OF MEMORY, AND ITS
CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN DEPTHS
OF YET UNFORMED IDEAS.**

Johanne Skovbo Lasgaard



Photo: The Danish Arts Foundation archives



Jacob Jessen's 'Un-future Horizon' occupies a central position in the dining room and offers a visual focal point seen from the living room.
Photo: Steffen Kloster Poulsen

Jacob Jessen

Wall object, mixed media, 2016

UN-FUTURE HORIZON

The dining room features a series of works by Jacob Jessen, whose practice revolves around manifesting abstract concepts, such as time, history and context, as material form.

‘Un-future Horizon’ consists of used objects that have been cut in half and hung on the wall, so that the gap forms a shared horizon.

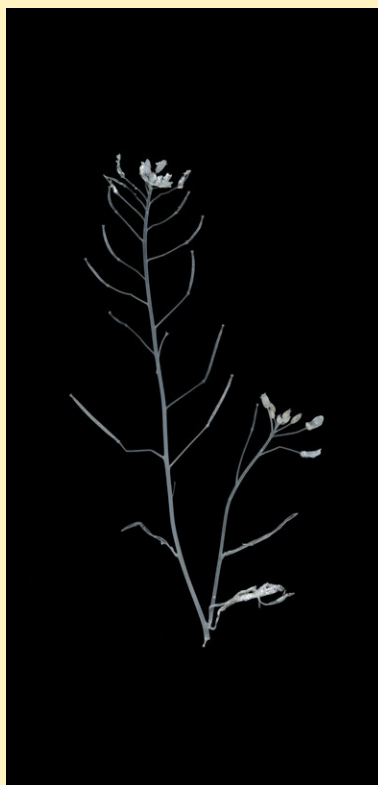
The objects are personal items that once belonged to philosophers, judges, pastors, politicians and others who work with ethics and thus consider issues of right and wrong on a daily basis.

The horizon is the concrete visual boundary of the individual’s world. At the same time, in both a metaphoric and a concrete sense, it has always been associated with notions and expectations of the future: ‘What is on the horizon?’

In a sense, Jessen reinterprets a genre that normally belongs to classic traditions from 19th-century rococo: the conversation piece. An object that is placed in the middle of a lavishly laid dining table to serve as a topic of conversation. Here, the objects are instead placed on the wall in a new take challenging the classic conversation piece.

IN MY WORK I EXAMINE OR RATHER MATERIALIZE THE CONCEPT OF TIME. UN-FUTURE HORIZON CAN BE SEEN IN THE WAKE OF THIS - SENSING A TEMPORALITY, A FUTURE, BY FORMING A NEGATIVE HORIZON OUT OF OBJECTS WITH A KNOWN PAST.

Jacob Jessen



The pieces are created by placing gathered plants in a chlorine solution, where they are bleached and eventually turn almost transparent. The treated plants are then scanned on a flatbed scanner with the lid open. That produces the black background. Finally, the scans are printed on matt photographic paper, where the black field creates a spatial sense, the plant floating behind the glass. Photos: Galleri Jacob Bjørn



Photo: Steffen Kloster Poulsen

Rune Bosse

Photo on UV glass, black wooden frame, 2016

THREE PIECES

Rune Bosse's work explores how we form and preserve memories. Each of the plants in the three pieces displayed in the dining room represents a certain place and moment in time to the artist.

By connecting his own memory of the place, the light, the sounds and his own emotions in a given moment with the plant, he turns it into a sort of physical manifestation of something light and immaterial.

The floral motif also contains a reference to collective memories and culture, for example in the Danish Flora Danica porcelain service or blue fluted porcelain.

IN MY PRACTICE I USE NATURE TO EXAMINE THE WORLD, SINCE MY PERCEPTION OF NATURE AND ITS SIMPLICITY GIVES ME THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPRESS MYSELF BOTH POETICALLY AND CLEARLY IN A UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE.

Rune Bosse



Chantrell is fascinated with the way glass captures light and movement, a quality that is underscored by placing the whale in a window.
Photo: Ned Chantrell

Ned Chantrell
Glass, 2017

KILLER WHALE

Ned Chantrell has created the little blue 'Killer Whale' that is placed in the window in the dining room. It is a realistic copy of an inflatable beach toy and looks like plastic although it is made of solid glass. This makes it very heavy and physical in contrast to the lightness one expects at first glance.

Chantrell draws inspiration from consumer culture, cartoons, graffiti and other phenomena, which he combines with strong foundation of quality craftsmanship. This creates a clash between high versus popular culture that forms the main arena of his practice.

At the embassy in Tokyo, the little blue whale also engages with the Japanese mascot culture, where entities from companies to municipalities use small creatures, often with a high cuteness factor, to promote cities, brands, tourism and so forth.

**I STRIVE FOR A CREDIBLE REPLICA
OF REAL INFLATABLE BATH ANIMALS,
BUT MADE OF SOLID GLASS. THEY'RE
NO GOOD AT SAVING YOU FROM SINK-
ING TO THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA.**

Ned Chantrell



The reliefs that make up Sif Itona Westerberg's 'Bitter Salt' suite are placed on both sides of a corner window that offers a peek of a more secluded part of the garden. Photo: Steffen Kloster Poulsen

Sif Itona Westerberg
Solid aluminium, 2017

BITTER SALT

‘Bitter Salt’ is a suite of five reliefs in solid aluminium cast directly in sand moulds where molten liquid aluminium takes its shape from imprints in the packed sand. The casts shown here represent widely different objects, such as dinosaur reconstructions, sea urchins, human skin, stones, branches, crystals, machine components, plastic, tyres and rubber soles.

Westerberg works with sculpture, installations and collage and explores how the current and future human imprint on the planet is manifested in geological strata.

The title, ‘Bitter Salt’, comes from the Latin word for aluminium. It also contains associations to the way everything transforms over time, while the elements always remain the same. However, salt leaves deposits, and so the title ‘bitter salt’ refers to bitter sediments, bitter traces.

MY WORK FOCUS ON HOW THE MAN-MADE FOOTPRINT ON THE PLANET, EVEN NOW, BUT ALSO IN THE FUTURE, WILL BE READ IN GEOLOGICAL LAYERS. A FUTURE POSTHUMAN REALITY IN WHICH TECHNOLOGY, NATURE AND MAN ARE INCREASINGLY OVERLAPPING SYSTEMS.

Sif Itona Westerberg

A BREATH OF MODERN DESIGN AT THE EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON, DC

The artworks were selected from a desire to add a little 'edge' to the canonized modernist expression of Wilhelm Lauritzen's mid-century building and to display some of the most innovative works from the contemporary Danish art scene in Washington, DC

The Danish Embassy in Washington D.C.

Seven thousand American and Danish guests visit the embassy annually, including political decision-makers, high-ranking officials, important cultural actors, journalists, business leaders and others. Thus, the embassy is an important meeting place for Danish and American interests.

The building has an open, transparent, modern expression. Lauritzen sought to create a 'democratic' building that is as far from a flashy pillar architecture and large American mansions as one can imagine. The embassy is thus the epitome of cultural diplomacy built in 1960 before the term had even been coined. The stringent and simple expression of the building's exterior continues in the interior, designed by Finn Juhl (1912–1984), which reflects national Danish values, traditions and ideas.

The embassy residence is filled with classic Danish furniture from the 'golden age' during the 1960s. Hence, it seemed obvious to bring contemporary examples of furniture design into the mix.

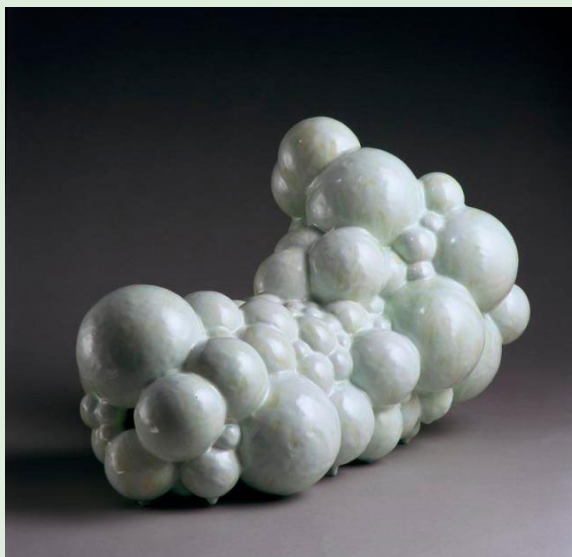
Art in an embassy is different from art in a museum. People do not come there to see art, but that does not mean the art is inconsequential. Visitors may return several times. Therefore, it is appropriate to have works that 'grow' on a person, that can bear being looked at many times, that have the capacity to arouse wonder and spark questions, dialogue and perhaps even debate.

The chosen works play on our expectations of what 'art' is and how it is created. There are no traditional paintings in the selection; instead, the artists express themselves in materials that are not normally associated with art or use traditional materials in new ways. Many of the artists work at the intersection of crafts, visual arts and sculpture and experiment with materials and forms of expression.

The dinnerware have since been moved to the General Consulate in New York, where they will play a role in representing Danish culture and values at future events and diplomatic dinners.



Louise Hindsgavls 'But I still remember the sound of my footsteps' (2012) combined with a cabinet by the Danish mid-century furniture designer Finn Juhl.



'Bobbles 3' (2003) Photo: Danish Arts Foundations Archives



'Organic' (2014). Photo: Danish Arts Foundations Archives



Steen Ipsen is well known in the scene of new, Danish ceramic art with a practice that lies between design and visual art.

Steen Ipsen
Stoneware

‘BOBBLES 3’, 2003 & ‘ORGANIC’, 2014

Steen Ipsen is interested in the creative process and investigates a theme again and again, as seen in the two pieces at the embassy, in which he assembles ceramic spheres to create an organic, effervescent form. His works are often glazed to acquire a ‘luscious’ expression and an almost industrial look although they are in fact unique hand-crafted pieces.

Ipsen is internationally acclaimed and represented in many museums around the world, including Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris and Victoria and Albert in London.

His work is often described as ‘basic research’ because he investigates the inherent relationship between form and decoration.

THE SCULPTURES ARE ALL UNIQUE. THE PROCESS IS BASED ON HAND-BUILT ELEMENTS BUILD UP IN TERMS AND VARIATIONS OR FREE HAND MODELLED OBJECTS. I FOCUS ON A HIGH LEVEL OF CRAFTSMANSHIP WHERE CERAMICS ARE THE CENTRAL PART OF MY WORKS.

Steen Ipsen



Louise Hindsgavl – 'But I Still Remember the Sound of My Footsteps' (2012). Photo: Louise Hindsgavl

Louise Hindsgavl
Porcelain, 2012

BUT I STILL REMEMBER THE SOUND OF MY FOOTSTEPS

In white glazed porcelain figures Louise Hindsgavl takes up the classic conversation piece. Her figures are immediately inviting, but upon closer inspection, one discovers uncanny qualities. The little creature in the sculpture in the entrance hall is deformed, with hands and feet that seem to have grown into the tree stump.

Hindsgavl and Ipsen both represent a renewal of the Danish ceramics tradition and are widely recognized around the world. Together, they have been invited to leave their mark on the entrance to the embassy, each with a piece on a small Finn Juhl table as a podium, which places their works at eye level for visitors.

IN MY WORK I ADDRESS THE DISCREPANCY BETWEEN TITLE AND CONTENT. THE LITTLE CREATURE'S SWEETNESS SET AGAINST A HOPELESS SITUATION. THE TITLE SUGGESTS AN OPTIMISTIC ATTITUDE IN SPITE OF THE SEVERELY LIMITED OPPORTUNITIES.

Louise Hindsgavl

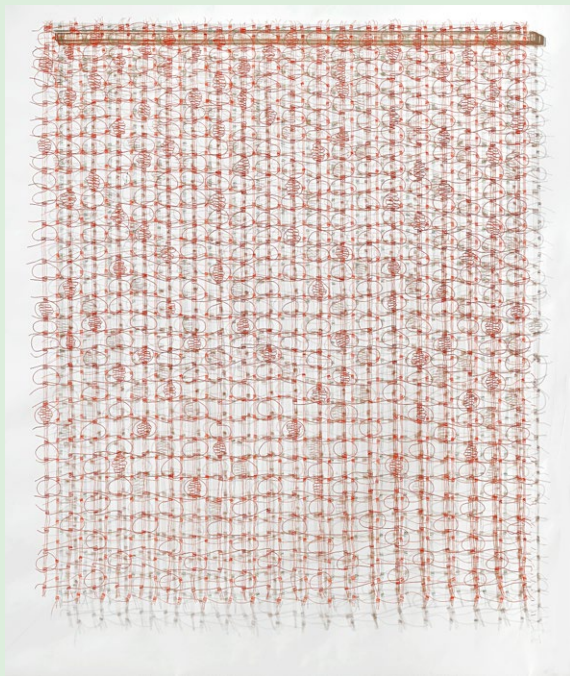


Photo: Mads Flummer

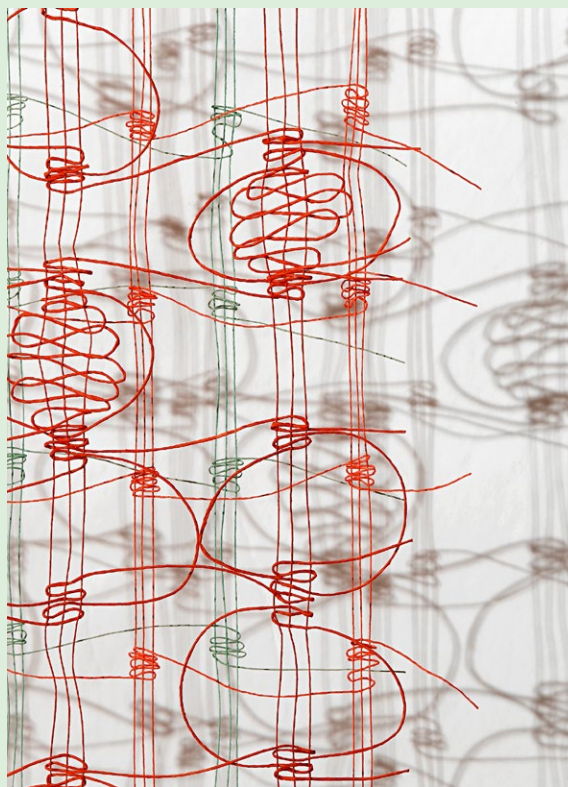


Photo: Danish Arts Foundations Archives



Anne Bjørn works at the intersection between weaving/tapestries, visual art and sculpture.

Anne Bjørn
Paper, 2013

RED WEB

Anne Bjørn's works are fundamentally two-dimensional, but by weaving shadow in as an essential element she challenges the tapestry as plane, creating works that are almost sculptural. Instead of using traditional yarn, she weaves with paper yarn decorated with acrylic paint.

I AM ATTRACTED BY PAPER AS MATERIAL BECAUSE IT IS SO BRITTLE. I WAS INTERESTED IN “DRAWING” WITH THREAD AND LETTING THE SHADOW ON THE WALL BECOME A KEY PART OF THE EXPRESSION.

Anne Bjørn



Henrik Frederiksen, Freja Chair, 2015
Photo: Danish Arts Foundation's archives



Guests are greeted in the entrance hall by several works of Henrik Frederiksen

Henrik Frederiksen
Wood, 2015

FREJA CHAIR, TEEPEE COAT RACK AND THE PEG

Henrik Frederiksen is a skilled carpenter who later graduated from the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts – Design (now Royal Danish Academy). Thus, he has a keen eye for the utility, functionality and design qualities of a material.

To Frederiksen, innovative thinking, function, detail, simplicity and lightness are the most important elements in his work with furniture and products. He aims to produce furniture that is simple and without ‘noise’ – every detail must have a clear purpose, and nothing should be made more complicated than necessary.

The three works, the Freja Chair, Tipi Stumtjener og Knagen (Freja Chair, Teepee Coat Rack and The Peg) (2015), are prototypes, which he has only produced in very limited editions.

The furniture itself is made in wood, but he plays on the image of the red-and-white barrier tape known from building sites, roadwork and safety signs, where it bars access. The pieces say “come on in”, take off your coat, have a seat’, and so, Frederiksen uses humour to turn our traditional expectations upside down.



Photos: Ole Haupt

Mette Vangsgaard
Glazed stoneware, 2016

FARMER ARNE TAKES A NAP

Mette Vangsgaard works with many different media, including drawing, watercolour, wood-cutting, collage and ceramic sculpture. She says, 'The pieces show a range of stories about Western civilization and our general problems. Some of the recurring themes are the effects of a rapidly changing world and the human view of nature.'

Like many of the other artists, she crosses genre boundaries – she trained as a visual artist but also works with ceramics. Today, ceramic is an especially popular medium that is no longer reserved for craft makers or ceramicists.

Vangsgaard has a particular interest in marginalized groups and ways of life, which she believes often disappear because of a political and social desire for growth and development. Her art is her way of preserving those ways of life.

Another recurring feature is her focus on everyday things – taking a nap on the couch with the dog, petting a horse's soft muzzle. With a keen eye for detail, she offers us an opportunity to get down to ground level and reminds us of sensuous details, often in encounters with nature.

THE WORK BONDEMANDEN ARNE SOVER TIL MIDDAG (FARMER ARNE TAKES A NAP) IS A PORTRAIT OF MY FORMER NEIGHBOUR ARNE HANSEN, WHO ALWAYS TOOK A NAP AFTER LUNCH.

Mette Vangsgaard

DINING WITH DESIGN: SITE-SPECIFIC DANISH TABLEWARE

The Art In Embassy-project was followed up by two dinner sets titled 'Dining with Design', created by Danish craft makers and designers. The first set, which included textiles, was created in 2016 for an american audience and was curated by Butik for Borddækning (Shop for Tablesetting). The second set was created in 2018 for a japanese audience and was curated by Margrethe Odgaard.



THE TOKYO DINNERWARE

The Tokyo Dinnerware was curated by Margrethe Odgaard, who had no doubts about the underlying purpose:

My goal was to give dinner guests at the embassy an extraordinary sensory experience – inviting them to use their senses of sight, touch, hearing, smell and taste. I chose this curatorial approach based on the conviction that the sense of quality and care in the things we surround ourselves with is reflected in our behaviour as human beings.

By combining the various artistic expressions the dining sets reflect the unique Danish tradition for design and material approaches.



Photo: Lasse Kusk



Photo: Lasse Kusk



Nourishing your senses

Our five senses guide us as we engage with the world. Different materials, such as wood, ceramics, glass, textile, wicker and metal, represent a rich diversity of temperatures, sources and shapes, each gratifying our senses in its own unique way. This tableware collection was developed with great care for the aesthetic dimension and for sounds, scents and surprising qualities that arise in the combination of

pieces. Precise industrial design meets craft making to form a harmonious total experience that conveys an impression of the cultural aspects of the Danish tradition for table setting. A tradition that is based on quality objects, consummate craftsmanship and attention to detail. An insistence on authenticity and the inherent narrative of the materials and an invitation for you to nourish your senses.

Margrethe Odgaard, curator



Photos: Frederik Lindstrøm

THE WASHINGTON DINNERWARE

The dinnerware was designed specifically for an American audience with contributions from 17 different Danish artists and designers.

The dinnerware illustrates the unique Danish tradition of design and understanding of materials as well as the long-held Danish tradition of dialogue and democratic processes.

Design and architecture spark conversations between guests and hosts, while Wilhelm Lauritzen's architecture and Finn Juhl's design together create a bright and transparent expression.

The dinnerware has now been moved to the General Consulate Official Residence in N.Y. City.



The Washington Dinnerware. Photo: Ole Akhøj



Photo: Dorte Krogh



Photo: Ole Akhøj



The Washington Dinnerware. Photo: Ole Akhøj

CULTURE DOES NOT THRIVE IN A VACUUM BUT DEVELOPS IN INTERACTION WITH OTHER CULTURES. IF DANISH ART AND DESIGN AT THE EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON CAN SPARK DEBATE AND CONVERSATION BASED ON SOMETHING AS SIMPLE AS THE CUP WE HOLD IN OUR HAND, THEN THE COMMUNICATION OF DANISH VALUES IS SUCCESSFUL.

*Astrid Krogh, former chairperson
of the Danish Arts Foundation's Committee
for Crafts and Design.*

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About the Danish Arts Foundation

The Danish Arts Foundation works to make art of high quality available to a wide audience all over Denmark, to promote Danish art internationally and to pave the way for talented artists.

We are Denmark's largest arts foundation funding more than 6,000 artists and art projects every year.

We fund the production and promotion of visual arts, literature, music, performing arts, architecture, film, crafts and design as well as work that transcends the borders of these art forms. Our 16 expert committees are responsible for awarding grants to Danish art projects.

The Danish Arts Foundation wishes to facilitate the conversation about our shared world of art, and we invite everybody to join in.

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