

HARALD ENGMAN

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BILLEDER FRA BESÆTTELSESTIDEN



Julemiddag til Gæsterne!

Stockholm 1943

50 MALERIER OG TEGNINGER

I UDVALG VED

JOSEF PETERSEN

CLICHÉER OG TRYK EGMONT H. PETERSEN

KØBENHAVN 1945



STATE OF FLORIDA

COUNTY OF DADE

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that the following is, to the best of our knowledge and belief, a true and accurate translation into English of the attached Danish-language document.

Marie Hero
University of Miami Translation Service

Sworn and subscribed before me this 19 day of July 1989.

Richard L. Lapsier
Notary Public State of Florida at Large

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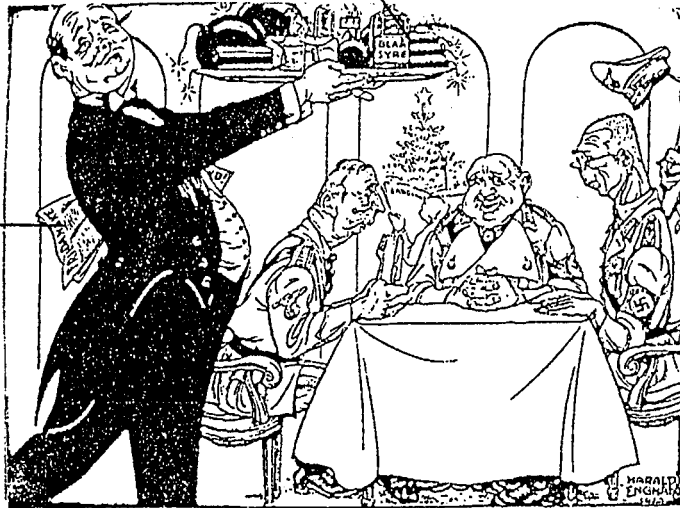
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HARALD ENGMAN

PICTURES FROM THE OCCUPATION

(acid)

The Free Dane
(Newspaper
Title)



Christmas dinner for the guests!

50 Paintings and Drawings
selected by

Josef Petersen

Printed by Edmont H. Petersen
Copenhagen 1945

1940 The Suicide of Germany and Japan!

(Picture entitled Harakiri)

During the unsettled and nerve wracking days before the Nazi Flash Flood inundated Denmark - in the beginning of April, 1940 - an art exhibition located in "BO's" galleries on Amager Square attracted large crowds of people.

The painter, Harald Engman, named his exhibit "Black Banners", but the immediate overall impression of this exhibit was of a colorful mosaic of glass, filled with light reflecting effects and of a humorous, sparkling, overwhelmingly evil temperament, an unsettled and politically daring fantasy.

His caricatures pictured Leo Swane, the Museum Director, as a sphinx flying above the museum, and the politician, Stauning, was pictured as a conductor of a streetcar in the middle of Town Square, with its destination sign reading "Chaos". A pair of binoculars aimed at the moon seemed to describe the avoidance fantasies which preoccupied so many Danes during those days.

When one now, five years later, recalls the exhibit, one wonders over the almost prophetic clairvoyance which appeared in his subject matter and of the clear message of his pictures.

As mentioned, visitors came in large numbers as is only the case when painters presently on vogue call upon the public's attention, and yet this exhibit was not by a fashionable artist. On the contrary!

Harald Engman was neither "abstract" nor "surrealistic" nor did he belong to any of the leading "isms". He was not a follower, and his work was far from resembling the old honored Danish folk painters from Exner's period. His colors might be dark, but not as in those heavy, gray, provincial paintings. It was a fascinating "clairobscur" thunder, alive with bloody fire, golden and poisonous green lightning.

In his paintings, the need to create fine coloristic values was not absolute as was the case for almost all painters of the period between the wars. These between war painters seemed motivated by the last brilliantly artistic discoveries of Deenniers, but unfortunately none of them was able to draw.

As we know, the need to express oneself through colors and textures had become so great that the linear sense, which after all was the beginning of all visual art, had faded away and was then by many artists, rudimentary. With Harald Engman, however, color was not the primary objective; lines also came into their own. His drawings and paintings were filled with satire - sharp, macabre, and merciless, unrelated to most other artists of the period. However, he did have certain traits in common with "Storm Petersen" and "Anton Hansen" - mostly the latter. He also showed a distinct relation to the artists "Benghel" and "Goya".

His satire was mainly aimed at a single target: Nazi Germany, while most of the other artists, both writers and painters, remained silent when Hitler's name was mentioned. Engman, on the other hand, depicted Der Fuhrer, not as a genius of satanic majesty, as many Danish Anti-Nazi's saw him, but as a psychopathic misfit, a frightened and conceited fool, sort of a ludicrous master clown of the world's arena. It was not surprising, that the public came flocking to see for themselves, the young artist's foolhardiness.

Many visitors seemed relieved to return to the street again, as if danger was lurking in all corners of the exhibition halls where "Der Fuhrer" was presented as a stupid slavetrader and his cohorts as medal decorated gorillas.

On April 9, the Germans closed down the exhibit. The fearless painter went into seclusion in North Sealand, where he continued to paint underground till the earth finally became so hot, that he had to leave for Sweden. But from Sweden, he continued to draw for the journal, "The Dane", as well as for several Swedish publications. In this manner, he continued his efforts in the fight against the Nazis.

This exhibit was not the first time Harald Engman had expressed his feeling about Hitler's gang. Already in 1938 he was showing his pictures below the Town Hall Square -

among "The Underground Painters". The group seemed to have been named by Engman, although he himself was the only artist who ultimately needed to go underground. It is safe to say that neither dynamite nor other explosives were found in any other Danish painters' works. Through his fluorescent shades of color he separated himself from his colleagues paler works of art.

One of Engman's paintings, a huge canvas titled: "The Circulatory System", pictures a scene from the then current merry-go-round of world politics, with myriads of people amongst whom, a group of prominent politicians was led by Mussolini and Hitler.

A man who felt personally offended by Engman's work gave the police a tip, but before the municipal personnel arrived to evaluate the blasphemous works, Engman painted beards on both Mussolini and Hitler. The now masked dictators were then allowed to remain on the wall as opposed to a picture of Hitler wearing angel wings and carrying a flaming sword, which was prohibited, and had to be removed.

Before the Nazi "gangster-gladiators" marched into the European arena to the tune of Horst Wessel, Harald Engman was usually expressing himself through the social satire in his paintings. Their contents consisted of the misery of the poor streets, prostitutes, unemployment, the Copenhagen

Boheme, with whom he was very familiar, and the prolitaristic group of artists and their tragically comical figures. But already at this stage he had gone through a long and strongly emotional development.

Harald Engman was born in Copenhagen in 1903 and he began to sketch in his early childhood years. From 1928, he held exhibits about 10 times in total - at Charlottenborg and at other separate exhibits. From the very start, he was strongly controversial because of his unusual and stubborn independence from major cliques. With all sympathy for the different modernisms within the art of painting, and in acknowledgement of the fact that there probably never has been so many new and truly valuable pieces of art created as during the years of the breakthrough of the impressionists till the present time, one might say, that now and then an experimental art was practiced within the revolutionary boundaries, especially after the revolution was over, and the rebels had taken over. And it is not certain that only old reactionary grouches have undergone this terror. But Engman has not let his work be dictated by the trends of the time. He has continuously gone his own way - goal directed and steady - knowing his limitations and the boundaries of his abilities. His technique is solely his own, influenced by glazes - one thin coat of transparent color on top of the

other until the desired light and color effect has been achieved. His abilities in composition are unusual and extraordinarily daring; his fantasies are endless and his humor contagious. I remember, that Peter Nansen once said to a young writer, "Johannes V. Jensen is great, but we only need one of his kind - on the other hand, we can use any number of Palle Rosenkranz's". It is possible that you can say something similar in reference to Harald Engman. Perhaps we oughtn't have too many of his kind, but till now he has not started a trend, and we desperately need one Harald Engman!

Earlier on in his life, Engman travelled. He visited England and France, first as a seaman, later as a tourist. For a while he lived in New York's Chinatown where he socialized with the Chinese and it has not failed to affect his development. He is still an eager student of the Chinese language, literature, and art. For several years he has been part owner of a small Chinese store in the inner city of Copenhagen. It resembles the shops of Chinatown with their shining lacquer, red silk and incense. Here Engman was a welcoming host for his friends, and the conversation in the back room went on in many languages, since quite often the guests were China men dropping by for a game of Mah-Jongg and a cup of real tea. After returning from his long stay in

Sweden, Engman now, once again, can be found in his Chinese store and will hopefully no longer have to let down his international circle of friends, who enjoy this little oasis in the concrete desert.

Harald Engman focuses on describing the type more than the individual, and the concept of time through his mass effect more than the type. When he uses Hitler as a subject, he is not interested in portraying the man himself, but solely in expressing his disgust and hatred of the Nazi dressed up and masked as the dreadful "Kopenick" figure. When he shows Hitler amongst his companions, the primary goal is not for the viewers to recognize Goring, Gobbels, Hess, Streicher or whomever these feared terrorists are, but to unveil the sadism, the grim and evil, smoldering bloody boasting coward, the sadly inferior and pitiful exhibitionism, the majestic and the hopelessly contradictory characteristics this special "Prussian reversed heroism" represents. And that, Engman still fails to accomplish—unconventional, unpretentious, with the addition of humor and tolerance which is ~~the~~ most valuable spice of the satire. If an evil fate had let him be born in Germany, he might possibly have become a deadly serious and dramatically overdimensioned finger pointer with "wrinkled doomsday brows".

But, there is a well meaning laughter hiding within his manifestation even of the saddest and most horrible of his immortalizations. This satiric laughter is like a contrasting point, an ideal accompaniment for varied themes. It can, as for example in the Boheme paintings, act as the laughter of the circus clown over his own tricks, and at times it may have an urgent Mephistophelean undertone which causes people to shiver. It is interesting to read through the critics' reviews of Engman's exhibits. These are the reporters of the new "ism's", expressing themselves. But with a feeling of satisfaction and wonder you acknowledge that everyone salutes and honors his talent, even though they might squirm a little, sensitive as they are to his masculine violence. One critic, upon the sight of one of Engman's satirical social scenes, recalled the well known, infamous ceramist, who created his masterpieces by pouring boiling glazes over small living animals - a comparison which shows how deeply Engman's satire impressed him. Another critic exclaims, "Is it for spite he paints in a literary style, although in some circles this sort of painting is not viewed favorably? Hopefully he will retain this spite for a long time!".

There is probably no doubt that it would have pleased the national socialists, had Engman joined their movement.

And had he had an ice-cold, satanic personality, as that French ceramist who tortured living creatures in order to achieve an artistic illusion in the cheapest way, there is no doubt that he would have joined the leaders when they seemed to be destined to become the rulers of the world. But Harald Engman withstood this test while others - and unfortunately not always the worst - failed. He remained faithful to his conviction and had to pay the price as everyone else. In his case, it was to flee the country. He was missed in the totality of Danish art while he was abroad. There were plenty of painters yet, who had remained on the battlefield, and who were able to stay because they by all means had remained neutral and politically colorless. During this time many painters did not care if their art told a story, but solely experimented with the colors. Engman was an artist in both a dramatic and musical sense. He could probably also appear rather harsh in his effects and the music of his pictures often made sensitive individuals cover their ears as from the noise of an orchestra, playing it's tunes at full blast. But there was always a solid sense to his drama and a force in his tunes. And it was undeniable that he left an empty space behind when he had to leave Copenhagen.

We welcome Harald Engman back from the bottom of our hearts! We are looking forward to a reestablished

relationship with his daring and biting satire, his unpretentious and fantasy filled temperament. He does belong to the daredevils who not only challenge, offend and contradict the speechless folks, but who also have the guts, humor, and feistiness to offend the offending! How he was able to manage among the stylish Swedes is a puzzle - judging by his personality, one would expect that he would fit in better amongst the Norwegians. But let us now be thankful that we again have the good humored undisciplined satirist back in Denmark, and for his probably still rather long journey towards the climax of his development. There are "devilish splinters" in Harald Engman's "troll mirror" but it behooves us to indulge in the self analysis of its reflection although at times it will cause our eyes to burn.

- Josef Petersen