THE ASMUNDUR SVEINSSON SCULPTURE MUSEUM

Sigtun— Reykjavik—Iceland



FORMAL OPENING EXHIBITION
May—August 1983

MAYOR'S ADDRESS

It has been said that statues in Reykjavik do in many respects differ from those in the world's other capitals. Most of the latter show characters of past times, Kings and Emperors or victorious Generals elevated on to high columns commemorating heroic deeds or ancient acts of renown.

Reykjavik does not have such sculptures as we do not pride ourselves with famous Generals apart from the aces who daringly and with cunning performed their artful acts in the nation's fisheries disputes with alien parties. No statues of them have so far been erected. Many poets and artists have, on the other hand, been hewn in stone and so have memorials to the unknown commoner.

But other factors are bound to be noted. Most of Reykjavik's statues are of recent origin and created by a few persons. Asmundur Sveinsson was one of the pioneers. He went his own way, resembling no-one, neither here nor elsewhere. His feeling for the capital was clearly shown when he decided to bequeath his sculptures to Reykjavik and that the museum at which we are should be subject to the control of the capital's representatives and his family in the near future. This was a great gift showing much magnanimity. It does not mean that Asmundur Sveinsson stood in need of a grand memorial to his generosity borne out by this act. His entire works testify thereto.

On the occasion of the formal reopening of the Museum our minds stray to the great and late artist and to the works which will commemorate his name and please the eye during centuries to come.

I heartily congradulate the citizens, the Museum Committee, the Curator and all those concerned on this occasion which marks the reinstating of the Asmundur Sveinsson Museum to a dignified position in the City's life.

Davíð Oddsson

THE LIST OF WORKS

1) A negro (1926)
2) The Goddess of Song
3) A boy
4) Lady and Amor (1926)
5) Grettir's death (1928)
6) Mermaid (1922)
7) Saemund and the seal (1926)
8) The depression (1934)
9) The Viking (1928)
10) Woman with accordion (1934)
11) Night in Paris (1928)
12) Venus on the sea
13) The people (1934)
14) Worship (1940)
15) Snowstorm (1933)
16) Mother earth (1936)
17) The gardener (1934)
18) A boy and a girl (1933)
19) A woman churning milk (1934)
20) Resting (1935)
21) Lady with a beaker (1933)
22) The weather prophet (1934)
23) The hay truss (1935)
24) Washerwomen (1936)
25) War and flight (1943)
26) Saving a life (1936)
27) The blacksmith (1936)
28) The water carrier (1937)
29) Washing the floor (1950)
30) An outcast child and its mother (1943)
31) Artistic inclination (1936)
32) Creation (1949)
33) Heaven and earth (1935)
34) A man and a woman (1941)
35) Midsummernight (1940)
36) The Miller
37) Washerwoman (1937)
38) Spring (1940)



The depression

39) Resting
40) Inter-stage
41) The sisters (1936)
42) The kiss (1936)
43) The birch (1952)
44) Birth (1949)
45) A lamp
46) The godess of love (1949)
47) Breath on a window (1963)
48) Yearning for Space
49) Space dragon (1957)
50) Loki's evil counsel (1967)
51) Folk song
52) A fagot (1953)
53) Flying future
54) The bird Phoenix (1960)
55) Eve speaks (1950)
56) The sorcerer's hut (1951)
57) Volcanic threat
58) In the hands of a troll (1949)
59) A magician (1946)
60) Roentgen memorial (1960)
61) Lament (1948)
62) Volcanic Eruption
63) The elements (1957)
64) Literary knowledge

65) Song at the spinning wheel
66) Easter
67) Song of the sea (1950)
68) Volcanic eruption
69) Volcanic fire
70) The future (1953)
71) The face of the sun (1959)
72) The last bird of passage (1959)
73) David and Goliath (1952)
74) In memory of the unknown author (1959)
75) Man and substance
76) The flame of life (1950)
77) Glasstowers fall (1960)
78) Maimed bird
79) Odin's raven (1952)
80) Tristan and Isolde
81) Religions (1956)
82) Black clouds (1947)
83) The sigh (1948)
84) Giantess
85) Moon and music
86) You slaked my thirst (1959)
87) Electricity (1955)
88) The primeval king (1960)
89) Abstraction in pyramids (1959)
90) Prayer
91) A spire (1951)
92) Time (1949)
93) Energy of life (1960)
94) The last voyage
95) Through the sound barrier (1952)
96) Life in the Deep
97) Hydro-power
98) Head ransom (1948)
99) Babtismal font
100) Passion notes (1956)
101) Sun of peace and settlement



The weather prophet

102) Flying saucers
103) The music of the spheres (1959)
104) Eve with the Apple
105) Mother love (1948)
106) Growth of the soil (1945)
107) The oak (1946)
108) The ray of life (1960)
109) Easter
110) The primeval mother (1954)
111) Ripples of the waves (1952)
112) Man and substance
113) A lamp
114) Bon voyage



Saemund and the seal

Asmundur Sveinsson was born in West Iceland on May 20th, 1893. He came to Reykjavik in 1915 and studied wood-carving with Ríkardur Jonsson, attending lessons in draughtmanship at the Technical School.

Following upon his wood-carving apprenticeship, completed in the autumn of 1919, Asmundur Sveinsson went to Copenhagen, spending a winter at a draughtmen's school, his tutor being Viggo Brandt. Thereupon he proceeded to Stockholm, passing the entrance examination to the Academy of Fine Art in the autumn of 1920. He studied there for six years, his principal master being the sculptor Carl Milles.

Having passed from the Swedish Academy of Fine Art in the spring of 1926, Sveinsson went to Paris where he spent three years, i.a. being trained by the French sculptor Despiau.

Asmundur Sveinsson returned home to Iceland in the spring of 1929 after ten years' residence abroad. In 1933 he built his first studio at Reykjavik, but in 1941 he began work on this museum building which served as the artist's studio, home and exhibition area. The artist bequeathed his collection to the City of Reykjavik. He died on December 9th, 1982.

On the occasion of the formal opening of the Museum on May 21st, 1983 coupled with the artist's 90th birthday, it is deemed fitting to stage an exhibition presenting a survey of Asmundur Sveinsson's extensive and colourful career. The present exhibition does, however, display but a part of the Museum's objects d'art. The artist also left numerous other sculptures, thousands of drawings, being tryouts, originals of works or independent objects, as well as photographs frequently displaying various stages of development of sculptures.

At the present exhibition it has been emphasized to select and show works which are characteristic of each era of Sveinsson's art. An attempt has also been made at grouping together works which are stylistically linked. Thus the viewers are afforded an opportunity of studying the changes in form appearing in the artist's works.

In the oldest works (up in the Dome) we notice manifold and even heterogenous form research which subsequently bred the artist's personal form in the 1930's (downstairs in the Dome and in the Main Hall). During the following decade Sveinsson's art was subject to extensive changes. The artist's main emphasis centred on disintegrating the natural proportions and forms, thus removing himself from the scholastic traditions. This working of the form naturally led to Sveinsson's abstract art which is most frequently symbolic and even extends to specific stories (the Studio).

The artist's grandiose and complex career notwhithstanding, it is easy to discern a firm stability of meaning and form: - Asmundur Sveinsson's Style.

Gunnar B. Kvaran.



Museum Committee: Einar Hakonarson, Chairman
Asdis Asmundsdottir
Hulda Valtysdottir
Gudrun Erla Geirsdottir
Haflidi Jonsson
Thora Kristjansdottir

Museum Curator: Gunnar B. Kvaran

Open 2—5 p.m. all days except Mondays

Address: Asmundarsafn vid Sigtun
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1983

BÓKMENNTIRNAR Í LIST ÁSMUNDAR SVEINSSONAR

Formleg opnun viðbyggingar við Ásmundarsafn

Laugardaginn 13. apríl kl. 15.00 verður opnuð sýning í Ásmundarsafni sem ber yfirskriftina Bókmenntirnar í list Ásmundar Sveinssonar. Jafnframt verður formlega tekin í notkun ný viðbygging við Ásmundarsafn.

List Ásmundar Sveinssonar hefur í flestum tilfellum til að bera ákveðið myndefni til jafns við formræna úrvinnslu höfundarins. Og að vissu marki má segja að list Ásmundar hafi gegnum sneytt ákveðna bókmenntalega miðlun. Ef frá eru taldar þær höggmyndir sem Ásmundur skapar á sínum unglingsárum heima að Kolstöðum og fáeinar modelstúdíur hjá Ríkarði, þá eru fyrstu tilþrif listamannsins varðveitt í textum, bréfi, sem hann ritar móður sinni frá Kaupmannahöfn í aprílmánuði árið 1920. Þar kemur fram að Ásmundur á í mestu erfiðleikum með að koma hugmyndum sínum í leirinn, - fast form - hugleiðingum sem eru fyrst og fremst bókmenntalegar og augljóslega undir miklum áhrifum frá Einari Jónssyni. Því miður hafa þau verk sem Ásmundur gerði í Kaupmannahöfn veturinn 1919 til 1920 ekki varðveist.

Árið 1922, þegar Ásmundur var við nám í Stokkhólmi velur hann sér bókmenntalegt viðfangsefni um Sæmund á selnum og á næstu árum sækir Ásmundur, vafalítið undir áhrifum frá kennarar sínum Carl Milles, myndefni í grísk-rómverka goðafræði, mótar Venus á hafinu og Hafmey sem hann fær fyrir verðlaun listaskólans vorið 1922. Milles, sem sjálfur hafði unnið út frá bókmenntalegum forsendum, hvatti Ásmund m. a. til að myndgera íslenskar þjóð- eða Íslendingasögur. Ásmundur rýnir m.a. í Grettissögu á þessum árum og myndirgerir Dauða Grettis. Í París endurgerir hann Sæmund á selnum í síð-kúbískum stíl.

Á fjórða áratugnum er minna um bókmenntalegar tilvísanir í list Ásmundar . Hann gerir þó margar af sínum fegurstu myndum lík og Vatnsberan, Veðurspámann og Þvottakonur, myndir með afgerandi félagslegan undirtón.

Aftur á móti þegar komið er fram á fimmta áratuginn sækir Ásmundur oft og iðulega myndefni í bókmenntirnar og skiptir það þá

einu hvort það eru Íslendingasögur, þjóðsögur, goðafræðin eða biblían. Hann les sérstaklega Egilssögu og myndgerir ljóðin Höfuðlausn og Sonartorrek. Í biblíunni staðnæmist hann við Sköpunina og gerir ennfremur tvær myndir um Evu. En þjóðsagan er ekki langt undan og þangað sækir hann myndefnin Tröllkona og í hina hádramtísku mynd Móðir mín í kví kví.

Abstraktlist Ásmundar er sérstæð fyrir marga hluta sakir. En þó sérstaklega vegna þess að þar sækir hann ekki síður myndefni í bókmennirnar. Hann vinnur umfram allt í járn og myndirnar, sem eru táknrænar, vísa ýmist í Lokaráð, Fönix, Tristan og Ísold og eða Eldmessuna.

Þótt verk Ásmundar Sveinssonar séu í flestum tilfellum frásagnarleg og að stór hluti þeirra byggi á tilteknum bókmenntum gengur listamaðurinn aldrei of nærri sögunni. Ásmundur er ávallt meðvitaður um að höggmyndin lifir ennfremur sjálfstæðu lífi sem byggir á sínum myndrænu lögmálum.

Ásmundur Sveinsson hóf byggingu kúluhússins við Sigtún árið 1942. Nokkru seinna bætti hann tveimur píramídum framan við húsið. Á árunum 1954-1959 reisti Ásmundur síðan bogaskemmuna. Ásmundur Sveinsson ánafnaði Reykjavíkurborg listasafn sitt eftir sinn dag. Hann andaðist í Reykjavík 9. desember 1982. Ári síðar var Ásmundarsafn formlega opnað. Árið 1988 var hafist handa við að byggja tengibyggingu milli kúluhússins og bogaskemmunnar. Arkitekt viðbyggingarinnar er Manfreð Vilhjálmsson.