

## HORST JANSSEN AND THE PICTORIAL TRADITION

*„On copying: slipping into someone else’s handwriting –  
listening to and heeding the message of one who has gone far ahead –  
forgetting one’s own self –  
now that is: the desire to lose oneself –  
forgetting oneself,  
in order to find oneself anew time and again.“ (Horst Janssen)*



Kathedrale nach  
Ensor, 1963,  
Radierung

Janssen’s ‚style of stylistic pluralism‘ (Petra Roettig), his free and imaginative interpretation of various models, demonstrates a keen sensitivity to the intrinsic connection between style, themes and techniques. None of these areas can be conceived of in isolation from the others.



Belästigung, 1957,  
Holzschnitt



Hockendes Mädchen,  
1950, Holzschnitt

Janssen’s role models are the great masters of art history. It is above all the graphic work of these ‚adopted ancestors‘ (the title of an exhibition at the Hamburger Kunsthalle) that fascinates him and leaves a deep mark on his own work: Rembrandt and Runge, Füssli and Friedrich, Klee and Kirchner, Menzel, Ensor and Schiele, but also Picasso, Oelze and Dubuffet – Janssen works his way through a wide variety of styles.



Saschka, 1964, Bleistift



Hetären, 1959, Radierung

His early woodcuts, still very much influenced by Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's Expressionism, were soon superseded by his first etchings. They reveal a visual language clearly inspired by Jean Dubuffet's 'Art Brut', which is raw and two-dimensional. Richard Oelze's later Surrealism inspired the young Janssen to adopt a delicate, spiderweb-like fine-line style, which he applied in his

drawings and etchings. The early, surreal-satirical Paul Klee also left a distinct mark on his work.



Die Schauspielerin Unger – nach Schadow!, 1972, Blei- und Buntstift

Janssen's pictorial inventions are free and highly imaginative adaptations of these stylistic models, not mere imitations. Janssen draws on the Old Masters in a truly classical manner: Brueghel and Botticelli, Caravaggio and Friedrich, Schadow, Guardi and Hobbema.



Klee und Ensor um einen Bückling streitend, 1961, Radierung

With reverent audacity, he circles around them, quotes them, immerses himself in their style and brushstrokes – an 'imitation of what is recognised as

valid' (Gerhard Schack). His copies are 're-creations through tracing', not purely mechanical reproductions.



Sie kommen! / 22.6.81, 1981, Feder, Tinte und Aquarell

Various role models also inspire him to explore different subject matters: his



Die Allee - „Hommage à Hobbema“, 1972, Radierung



Auch Bobethanien / 18.9.90, 1990,  
Feder und Aquarell

landscapes are modelled on the masters of the genre – Claude Lorrain, Hercules Seghers and Jan van Goyen – whilst his erotic works draw on Egon Schiele. It is no coincidence that Janssen's self-portraits, both in style and in their masterful use of etching, resemble those of Rembrandt, who, like no other, experimented with facial expressions, gestures, role-play and self-reflection in front of the mirror.

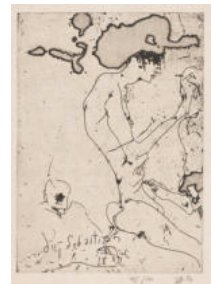


Selbst dramatisch, 1965,  
Radierung



Füssli / 31.1.73, 1973,  
Radierung

His fascination with human behaviour – its quirks, but also its dark sides – is evident in his fondness for the 'Capricci' of Jacques Callot and Francisco de Goya, as well as for the 'dark Romanticism' of Johann Heinrich Füssli, to whom he



Dir, Sebastian / 28.11.91, 1991,  
Radierung

dedicates an entire series.



Bergfrau  
Yamauba /  
20.9.88, 1988,  
Farbradierung



Kenzan und Jittoku vor  
Amsterdam / 23.3.88.,  
1988, Radierung

Through his collector and patron Gerhard Schack, he encountered the Japanese masters Katsushika Hokusai, Utagawa Hiroshige and Kyôsei Kawanabe. Their virtuoso mastery of colour woodcut, as well as the proximity of image and script in calligraphy, fascinated not only the visual artist



Der  
Vorübergänger /  
17.10.90, 1990,  
Ätzung nach  
Federzeichnung

but also the writer Janssen, triggering a veritable flood of creative adaptations of Far Eastern stylistic heights and visual

worlds.