



HORST JANSSEN'S TECHNIQUES

„The longing: ‘uncontrolled’ splashing of acid, virtuosity in creating ‘atmosphere’, delving into the damp and the misty. ... For these little synonyms for puddles and streams, for dark moors and bright horizons, must arise of their own accord in the acid bath. There should be little room for deliberate arrangement.“ (Horst Janssen)



Späte Gesellschaft I, 1954, Lithographie

Just as certain figures and periods in art history inspire him to explore particular themes, so too do certain techniques spark Janssen's imagination, which he adapts in his own unusual and distinctive way. He achieves the highest level of mastery as a draughtsman and etcher. But his experimental spirit is also evident in woodcut, lithography and photography. His

watercolours, ink drawings and washed pen drawings are also exquisitely delicate.

Lithography

From 1952 to 1956, Janssen designed commercial art, postcards and greeting cards for Guido Dessauer, a manufacturer of coloured paper in Aschaffenburg, and created portraits of his family, making use of the factory's own lithography workshop. Alongside this, he produced his own works, in which Janssen experimented with printmaking for the first time. His virtuoso versatility is evident in his skilful use of line, his thematic variations and his free interpretation of models



Mein Freund Lindau /
8.12.65, 1965, Lithographie



such as Matisse and Picasso, Klee and Dubuffet.

Woodcut



Katze und Vogel, 1953, Holzschnitt

Through his woodcuts, the then still young Janssen developed his own distinctive style in the 1950s, which brought him instant fame. These works occupy a pre-eminent position within his entire oeuvre in every respect. This relatively small body of work bears witness to an early stylistic development, an independent interpretation of art-historical models, and a sophisticated graphic formal language tending towards the abstract, which he did not revisit later in his career.

The first woodcuts, inspired stylistically and thematically by the Brücke artists and Edvard Munch, incorporate the organically grown grain of the printing block in a manner 'appropriate to the material'. In the two series of large-format colour woodcuts from 1957 and 1961, Janssen then develops an individual style characterised by graphic clarity, delicate colouring and decorative imagery.



Wald, 1961 (Druck 1987), Holzschnitt

Etching

The most important technique in Horst Janssen's oeuvre is etching, which he learnt from Paul Wunderlich in 1957. Over a period of around 35 years, he produced some 3,000 works, including 47 series. His refusal to use preliminary sketches, his direct incising of the printing plate and his unusual use of colour bear witness to his experimental



Internatsschule Schleswig, 1958, Radierung



Felsen 25.6.72, 1972, Radierung

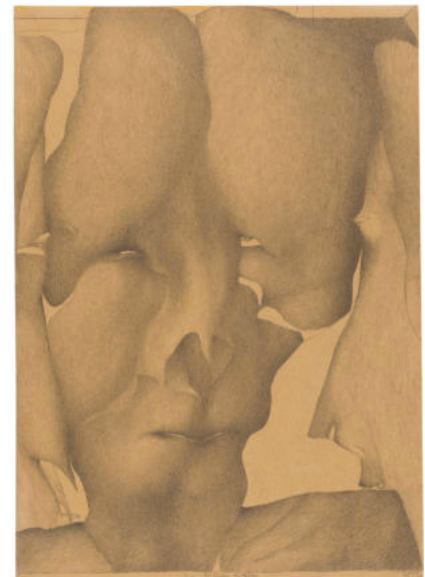
inventiveness, with which he adapted this traditional technique to his own ends. He drew inspiration from the metal printing plate to create landscapes, as well as numerous other subjects, making use of the properties of the materials: metal, printing ink and acid.

Drawing

„There are plenty of skilled draughtsmen, and countless true masters of the pencil, but true artists are few and far between.“

(Horst Janssen)

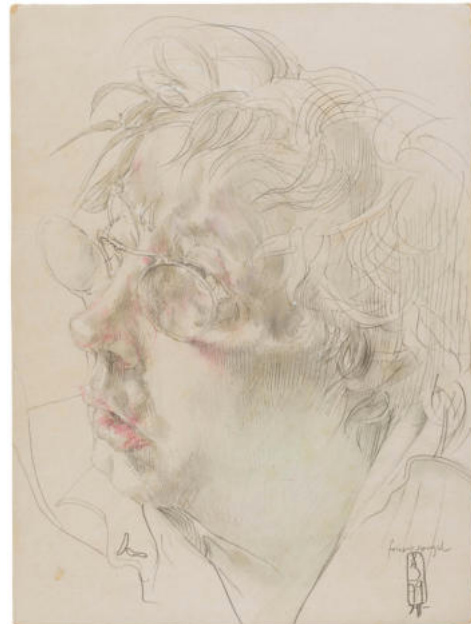
Janssen draws constantly. It is his way of engaging with the world. The pencil is an extension of the eye and an instrument of the mind; it mediates between reality and imagination. Janssen draws from memory, but also very specifically from the object itself. For him, a drawing is both: a record of the first notion, the ‘prima idea’, and a finished work. He produces fleeting sketches and stand-alone works, often combined with watercolour and ink.



Die Hundegräfin, 1967, Bleistift, Farbstift



In der Nähe von Savery, 1987, Feder,
Aquarell auf türkisfarbenem Papier



Frisierspiegel (Selbstbildnis), 1979,
Bleistift, Farbstift, Deckweiß

Watercolour and ink

„If there is one area in my profession where planning, intention and practice lead nowhere, it is in the washed-out pen-and-ink drawing—that pool of unevenly coloured water that swamps the inspiration of the guiding hand.“ (Horst Janssen)



Landschaft 31.12.91, 1991, Feder, Aquarell

For Janssen, the water-based mediums of watercolour and ink are an inexhaustible source of inspiration for his fantastical visual creations. He allows



himself to be guided by the inherent nature of these techniques and enters into a dialogue with chance, which he nevertheless masters with consummate skill.

Photography and Collage

For Janssen, photography complements drawing. In both media, his focus is on precise observation. He photographs the subjects that otherwise occupy his mind: self-portraits, still lifes and landscapes. Whilst he does not experiment with camera techniques, he does experiment with the results: the photographs serve as the starting point for subsequent processing using pen, pencil, paint and etching. The result is an experimental, distinctly contemporary body of work that offers a highly interesting insight into Janssen's visual perception.



Fotocollage Selbstporträt, 1980,



Tycho Brahe's Schwester
grüßt Roswitha, ca. 1973,
Collage, Tusche,
Kugelschreiber, Buntstift

Janssen does not use collage so much as an avant-garde subversion of pictorial space. Rather, it stems from his playful, form-oriented spirit of experimentation. Most often, it is created for a specific recipient, arising from entirely personal contexts as the realisation of spontaneous ideas. Drawing on a free play of associations, he takes whatever he happens to encounter and tinkers with it to create fresh, bold compositions, often spiced with a pinch of irreverence.

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