

The exhibition *The Fairytales of Carl-Henning Pedersen* opens at the Didrichsen Art Museum

Press release 27.8.2024

The exhibition *The Fairytales of Carl-Henning Pedersen* opens at the Didrichsen Art Museum on 7 September 2024. Pedersen (1913–2007), one of Denmark's most important modernists, has not been the subject of a solo exhibition in Finland since 1968. The artworks in the exhibition are on loan from the Carl-Henning Pedersen & Else Alfelts Museum in Denmark. The selection showcases the main themes of the artist's long career, from the 1930s until the founding of the eponymous museum in 1976. The exhibition is open 7.9.2024–26.1.2025.

A media event will take place at the Didrichsen Art Museum on Friday, 6 September at 11 am. Lotte Korshøj, Museum Director of the Carl-Henning Pedersen & Else Alfelts Museum will be present at the event. Registration: Maria Didrichsen, tel. 0405521000, maria.didrichsen@didrichsenmuseum.fi

Pedersen returns to Didrichsen

The Fairytales of Carl-Henning Pedersen brings together key themes from Pedersen's career in the most comprehensive exhibition of the artist's work in Finland. Pedersen's first solo exhibition in Finland was held in 1968 at the Didrichsen Art Museum, from where the exhibition travelled to the Wäinö Aaltonen Museum in Turku. Otherwise, Pedersen's works have been seen in Finland only rarely: in the 1960s, for example, in survey exhibitions of modern art at the Ateneum Art Museum and the Amos Anderson Art Museum, and in exhibitions focusing on the CoBrA art group.

Art of fantasies

Carl-Henning Pedersen, who began his career in the late 1930s, was one of the most important modernists in Danish visual art. A self-taught and spontaneous artist, he had a distinctive visual style and used the term “fantasy art” to describe his work. His expressive artworks depict imaginative birds, masks, winged horses, ships in the sky and celestial objects. Pedersen was interested in prehistoric and medieval imagery and indigenous art. He drew his inspiration from works created by children as well as from the dream world. The common human imagination and shared myths play an important role in the artist's imagery and writings. Particularly in his early works, one can find parallels with works by Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse and Paul Klee, among others.

His international breakthrough came in the mid-1950s. Pedersen was a member of the Northern European art group CoBrA (Copenhagen, Brussels, Amsterdam) which was active from 1948 to 1951 and whose exhibitions brought him international attention. Pedersen represented Denmark at the 1962 Venice Biennale alongside the sculptor Henry Heerup. His artworks have been exhibited, among others, at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York and the Carnegie Museum of Art in Pittsburgh.

Pedersen is also known for his monumental public works, most notably the frescoes, mosaics and stained-glass windows of the medieval cathedral in Ribe, completed in 1988. The left-wing fairytale artist's suitability as a church decorator sparked an art controversy in Denmark, which was widely discussed in public sections and cartoons.

The absolute freedom of the artist

Pedersen refused to sell his artworks after the early 1960s. He did not want his art to be used as a financial tool – it limited his artistic freedom. Visual art had to be accessible to the public in the same way that books are freely available for reading and borrowing in libraries. The desire for a public collection of his own was fulfilled when Pedersen, with the support of his patron, textile manufacturer Aage Damgaard, agreed to establish a museum in Herning, Denmark, in 1976. Pedersen donated the works in his possession to the museum. The Carl-Henning Pedersen & Else Alfelts Museum, owned by the municipality of Herning, houses the world's largest collection of the artist's work, with a total of 6000 artworks by Pedersen and his first wife, artist Else Alfelt. The museum has loaned nearly sixty artworks, both paintings and sculptures, for the exhibition. Three paintings from the Didrichsen collection complete the selection.

The article in the exhibition's catalogue is written by Lotte Korshøj, Museum Director of the Carl-Henning Pedersen & Else Alfelts Museum.

THE FAIRYTALES OF CARL-HENNING PEDERSEN 7.9.2024–26.1.2025.

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X: DidMuseum
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Opening hours

Tue–Sun 11–18
Mon closed

Tickets

16 / 14 / 10 €
Free admission for children under 18
Museum Card
Free admission to the Sculpture Park

Guided tours

In Finnish Sat and Sun 1pm, Wed 3pm
In Swedish Sun at 12 noon
In English every first Saturday of the month at 12 noon.

Exhibitions

7.9.2024–26.1.2025 *Carl-Henning Pedersen*
8.2.–1.6.2025 *Reidar Särestöniemi*