

WHICH IGNITES A LIGHT IN THE DARK

About visual artist and poet Jacob Juhl in connection with the exhibition *THE GENESIS* at Galleri Grundstof in Aarhus, April 2018.

Text: Trine Rytter Andersen

For a number of years Jacob Juhl has been working with a strongly condensed artistic expression, which is aesthetically rooted in minimalism and conceptual art. He develops his artistic subject field through a curious and persistent dialogue with epistemology, poetry, art history and natural science. Thereby, his studio becomes a 'hub' in which languages meet and his artistic studies accumulate their enunciation through his attentive interchange between the diverse languages of science, philosophy and art.

The work of developing shape in this field is analytical and slow and therefore it preconditions self-discipline and attention. The essence exists in the gaps, it lies hidden in the distance between languages, the world and us - and it emerges when we discover the limitations of any language and the different means of understanding through which we see the world. As a whole, Jacob Juhl is interested in what we are rarely conscious of and therefore do not have an eye for. He explores these topics to develop a new awareness of how we experience ourselves and the world.

The different series of work that see the light through this process can be viewed as a type of art synthesis characterised by a minimalistic purity: a form of aesthetic idealism approaching the sacred. Juhl's art employs a quiet surface that approaches us in a hesitant and ambiguous manner: with formal authority it addresses the beholder with an almost audible command to move closer, while at the same time the intended invisibility contributes to the understanding that we need to take our time in the hope of wrestling the works of their (universal) secrets.

This is especially true of the series *The Genesis* (*tilblivelsen* in Danish). The aesthetic is minimalistic with a repetitive, systemic and tight idiom, in which the number 29 reoccurs. The series mimes the 29 letters of the Danish alphabet: 29 square pictures, each of them a 'letter' in a visual sign language. The uniform and serial familiarity is created by 29 black and white photographs of 'nature', mounted on oakwood and partly hidden under frosted Plexiglas with 29 engraved texts horizontally along the middle axis of the surface of the pictures. The works hang on the wall, there is 29 cm between the artworks that each measure 29 x 29 x 2.9 cm. The 29 lines of text correspond with the overall system as each sentence is formulated with exactly 29 characters and every line beginning with 'which...' ('som...' in Danish).

However, unlike the formal precision, the texts are exploratory – from one picture to another questioning and rhythmic jumps are created. The texts are difficult to read and the beholders must work for it – discipline themselves – to get in contact with the texts, hear their 'news' and understand their ambition to open a passage for a genesis in the mass of the work itself – and in the beholder. A fragile and hardly visible genesis that occurs in line with the watchful sensuousness that manifests as a quivering recognition in the field of tension between simplicity and complexity – between the obvious and the mysterious.

Jacob Juhl was born in 1973 in Kjellerup, Denmark. He often works with photography but in a manner where the works become physical objects rather than depictions of reality. By refining and integrating elements such as sculpture and literature Jacob Juhl creates unique and powerful hybrids, which are aesthetically inviting and intellectually demanding at the same time. Jacob Juhl has had a long series of solo and group exhibitions in Denmark, for instance *In the Presence of Absence* in 2016, a solo exhibition at Galerie Pi in Copenhagen and XBunker in Sønderborg. In addition to this he has had a number of exhibitions abroad, among others the solo exhibition *Fibonacci + 1* at Galerie Martin Mertens in Berlin and the group exhibition *Imago Mundi* in Venice.