

Cathrine Raben Davidsen

In the autumn of 2023, Horsens Art Museum presents a new exhibition of artworks by Cathrine Raben Davidsen from the museum's collection.

Cathrine Raben Davidsen (b. 1972) graduated from the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in 2003. In addition, she has also studied art at the Instituto d'Arte, Lorenzo de Medici in Florence and at the De Vrije Academie voor Beeldende Kunst in The Hague in the Netherlands.

In Cathrine Raben Davidsen's artistic practice, historical narratives and ancient traditions as well as mythological figures are combined with the existential challenges and issues of contemporary individuals. In many ways, Cathrine Raben Davidsen is a sampler of various visual and aesthetic expressions and well-known motifs from the most renowned artists and writers in history. Themes of gender and identity are depicted with sensuality and materiality, inviting the viewer into the artwork.

Characteristic of her art, whether it is paintings, photographs, collages, ceramics, drawings, or graphics, are depictions of people, often women, whose bodies are in dissolution or appear blurred and indistinct. What remains are the clear depictions of their faces, often adorned with makeup and wearing a serious expression. Cathrine Raben Davidsen possesses a fascination with the individuals who have been overlooked by history. Through her works, she gives them the voice they never had.

Cathrine Raben Davidsen herself has stated that the core of her artistic practice revolves around loss, transformation, and death. She lost her father when she was just 13 years old. Therefore, art became a way for her to process her grief and find a means of expression for what was no longer there.

Below, you can read about three selected artworks from the collection which represent different periods and expressions in Cathrine Raben Davidsen's artistic practice.



Familie (1996). Oil on canvas. 200 x 240,5 cm.

Familie

The large painting *Familie* (family) is far from an idyllic family portrait. Cathrine Raben Davidsen drew inspiration from her own childhood for this piece. The portrait depicts a somber family scene, where illness and loss dominate the atmosphere.

This painting is one of Cathrine Raben Davidsen's early works. The artist lost her father in 1985 when she was 13 years old. The artwork portrays a young Cathrine Raben Davidsen letting go of her father. With this painting, the artist delves into themes of identity, transitional phases, life, and death, portraying a father who is nearing the end of his life.

As such, the work represents a pivotal time in the artist's upbringing, where she was confronted with death and loss while also going through a coming-of-age period, transitioning from childhood to finding her identity as a teenager.

Dark Night IV

In the painting *Dark Night IV*, Cathrine Raben Davidsen has incorporated several of her artistic trademarks, including the turquoise chakra color, dream-like motifs and the contrasts between fluid and solid forms.

This painting is part of a series of four artworks, all inspired by the poem *The Dark Night of the Soul*, written by the Spanish poet and mystic Saint John of the Cross (1542-1591) in the 16th century. The poem explores the union of the soul and the body with God, with the aim of discovering deeper meaning in life. This journey is referred to as "The Dark Night" because the darkness symbolizes the fact that the ultimate destination, God, is unknown. In the creation of *Dark Night IV*, Cathrine Raben Davidsen worked intuitively and with focus on process. She poured pigments, oil and water mixed with a binder onto the canvas, leading to an uncontrollable chemical process. Subsequently, she intuitively drew and painted based on the structures that emerged. Due to the various shades of turquoise and the wave-like structures, the motif evokes associations with the fluid and alien universe of the sea.



Dark Night IV (2016). Oil, pigment, acrylic and bleach on canvas. 300 x 300 cm.



As above, so below (2022). Oil on canvas. 180 x 300 cm.

As above, so below

In this new piece, we see a different facet of Cathrine Raben Davidsen's artistic endeavors. *As above, so below* contrasts with most of the artist's other works by not featuring any human figures. Instead, it focuses on what is often perceived as the opposite of humanity, the landscape.

This particular landscape is based on a photograph the artist took in Blekinge in Sweden. However, even though the painting portrays a real landscape, this appears much more dreamy and imaginative. According to the artist, this piece is not a depiction of a specific landscape but rather an exploration of the concept of landscape, inviting the viewer to make their own interpretation of the artwork. Just like in her other works, Cathrine Raben Davidsen has used vibrant colors that captivate the viewer. In this piece, this is evident in the bright yellow rays that not only illuminate the landscape but almost overheat it. The landscape suddenly seems to teeter on the edge between a dreamy adventure and a dystopian vision of the future.