

Michael Kvium

The Danish visual artist Michael Kvium (b. 1955) was born and raised in Horsens. He began his artistic career as an illustrator for the Horsens local newspaper, where he spent six years. Subsequently, he trained at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen from 1979 to 1985 and achieved his artistic breakthrough in the mid-1980s. In the current collection display, a wide range of the collection's iconic works by Michael Kvium are presented, including the *Self-Portrait* from 1985. This painting was the very first piece by the artist to be included in the museum's collection, which has grown over the last nearly 40 years to become the largest in the country.

In the painting, a man, according to the title, the artist himself, is standing and looking out an open window. He has no contact with the viewer but instead observes a world outside. On the wall in the sparsely furnished room, the man's shadow can be seen, which seems to live its own life independently of the man. A curtain flutters in the wind, creating dynamism in an otherwise static depiction. This contributes to a disturbing atmosphere of something surreal. The open window and the shadow both symbolically emphasize a form of psychological split. Thematically, the work revolves around the repressed and suppressed dark sides of human nature. This is characteristic of Michael Kvium, whose works often explore the repressed and unwanted aspects of existence.

The man is depicted with a primitive appearance—with long limbs and a small head, as if he were a modern Neanderthal. The monstrous figure is a recurring and recognizable feature throughout Michael Kvium's work, evident as early as 1985.

Michael Kvium is known for confronting his audience with exactly what we wish to turn our backs on and repress. His art revolves around the fundamental existential conditions of the individual—the good and the bad of being alive. The thematic content and recurring subjects often stem from opposing pairs such as the repulsive and the alluring, order and chaos, reality and fantasy, and life and death. Several iconographic symbols also recur in many of Michael Kvium's works: the lemon, the skull, the brain matter, and the symbol of the blind.

In the current collection display, it is possible to experience a wide range of paintings, drawings, and graphic works created in the period from 1984 to 2007.

