



DEN
HIRSCHSPRUNGSKE
SAMLING

PRESS RELEASE

NEW EXHIBITION

Ejnar Nielsen. Signs of Life

24 August 2022 – 11 December 2022

Danish artist Ejnar Nielsen painted life and death. The intimate and the monumental. He favoured subjects of dark solemnity, but also turned his attention towards budding life. Towards nature and hope.

From 24 August to 11 December 2022, The Hirschsprung Collection presents this autumn's major special exhibition: *Ejnar Nielsen. Signs of Life*.

EXISTENTIALIST SUBJECTS

Of all Danish artists active around the year 1900, Ejnar Nielsen (1872–1956) was the most direct and earnest in his approach to taboo and existential subjects such as illness, poverty, disability, loneliness, life and death. The artworks from his years in the central Jutland village of Gjern, for which he left Copenhagen as a young artist in 1894, revolve around these themes with particular insistence. Here he painted graveyards, terminally ill young people ravaged by tuberculosis, and funeral scenes set in beautiful landscapes. His paintings are often populated by the kind of individuals who rarely find their way into art: blind people, the poor, the sick and those who, for various reasons, must live their lives on the fringes of society.

IMAGES OF UNIVERSAL STATES

Ejnar Nielsen's pictures are not narrative in scope. Like his contemporary Vilhelm Hammershøi, Nielsen paints phenomena and states that light up empty spaces, and his works take on a monumental character. Not only because they are large, but because they raise man and nature above the specific and anecdotal to become images of universal states.





HORRIFYING AND HIDEOUS

Ejnar Nielsen's unflinching realism has been called horrifying and hideous. Even so, the sober, even severe outlook that prompted such descriptions is accompanied by an exuberant *joie de vivre*.

A PERVERSIVE LIFE FORCE

In Ejnar Nielsen's art, life is always haunted by death. He was comfortable in death's waiting room, producing some of his most influential works there. In Ejnar Nielsen's pictures, death seems to be the very prerequisite for the vitality and life force that also flourishes in his imagery.



ATTENTION TO SENSUOUS TACTILITY

Ejnar Nielsen demonstrates a keen painterly attention to sensuous aspects in his focus on surfaces. He paints stone-like or metallic garments offset by luminous hands, fluffy dandelion clocks and golden reflections, all coexisting happily in his works. The exhibition *Ejnar Nielsen. Signs of Life* explores the alert eye of an artist whose production was highly prolific, extending to paintings, textile design, decorations, handicrafts and furniture design. He also created art for public spaces such as a huge vaulted outdoor mosaic ceiling at the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen and decorative panels for the wedding hall at Lyngby Town Hall.

Ejnar Nielsen. Signs of Life is the first solo show of the artist's works since 1984. The exhibition presents all of Ejnar Nielsen's main works, on loan from museums as well as private lenders in Denmark and abroad. Highlights include *And In His Eyes I Saw Death*, 1887, SMK – The National Gallery of Denmark, Copenhagen; *Death and The Cripple*, 1898, The Thiel Gallery, Stockholm; and *The Pregnant Woman*, 1902–03, The Gothenburg Museum of Art.

The items on display also include letters, furniture, jewellery and other artefacts.

The exhibition design is by Mathias Mentze and Alexander Ottenstein. The exhibition is accompanied by a film created by director Bjarke Underbjerg. Furthermore, The Hirschsprung Collection and The Vejen Art Museum have entered into collaboration with the Danish Association of the Blind and the Danish Association of the Physically Disabled, a partnership which informed the creation of several listening stations in the exhibition, made by Mette Mærsk. Here, representatives of the two organisations talk about a selection of the artworks shown.



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The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue featuring contributions by: Camilla Klitgaard Laursen, Signe Havsteen, Peter Nørgaard Larsen, Teresa Nielsen, Charlotte Christensen, Jacob Wamberg and Ellen Egemose. Design and layout by Carl Zakrisson/Polytype.

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Ejnar Nielsen. Signs of Life was created in collaboration with The Vejen Art Museum.

Press photos:

Ejnar Nielsen: *The Blind Girl. Gjern*, 1896–1898, The Hirschsprung Collection
Ejnar Nielsen: *And in His Eyes I saw Death*, 1887, Statens Museum for Kunst
Ejnar Nielsen: *Death and The Cripple*, 1898, The Thiel Gallery, Stockholm
Ejnar Nielsen: *The Evening Bells*, 1899–1900, The Vejen Art Museum
Ejnar Nielsen: *Still Life with Flowers*, 1918, The Vejen Art Museum
Ejnar Nielsen: *Landscape with a Field of Rye, Gjern*, 1898, Randers Art Museum

High-resolution press photos available for download at: <https://www.hirschsprung.dk/kontakt-museet/presse>