

KURT SCHWITTERS IS BROUGHT BACK TO NORWAY

Following the great interest in Kurt Schwitters (1887-1948) aroused by our exhibition in autumn 2009, the artist is now to be awarded the position he deserves in Norwegian art and art history by means of a major collaborative project between The Henie Onstad Art Centre, The Romsdal Museum and The Sparebank Foundation DnBNOR.

This project is being arranged in the wake of the large-scale exhibition held at The Henie Onstad Art Centre in 2009/2010, which was the first major exhibition of Kurt Schwitters' art ever shown in Norway. Two of the objectives of this ambitious exhibition and catalogue project were to create awareness about Schwitters, his art and his connection to Norway, and also to initiate new research.

From this starting point, the following projects will now be put into motion:

- The establishment of a permanent showroom and competence centre at The Henie Onstad Art Centre at Høvikodden.
- The conservation of the remaining interior of the Merzbau construction at Hjertøya, with a view to exhibiting it at The Romsdal Museum in Molde, Norway. This project will also include a publication.
- Financial support of these projects and the acquisition of further works by Kurt Schwitters for Norway and the Art Centre at Høvikodden by The Sparebank Foundation DnBNOR.

Permanent showroom

Following the successful exhibition at Høvikodden, The Kurt and Ernst Schwitters Foundation and the Sprengel Museum in Hanover will continue their collaboration with The Henie Onstad Art Centre with a view to establishing a permanent Kurt Schwitters' room at the Art Centre, as a step towards "bringing Kurt Schwitters back" to Norway again. Through this initiative, The Henie Onstad Art Centre will become the centre for research into, and presentation of, Kurt Schwitters' art here in Norway. Høvikodden is a fitting centre for the presentation of Kurt Schwitters' art in Norway, since the artist resided in this area – in the road Fagerhøyveien in nearby Lysaker, from 1937 to 1940.

Conservation of Kurt Schwitters' MERZBAU construction on the island of Hjertøya

Kurt Schwitters and his family came to Hjertøya near the town of Molde for the first time in 1930, when they rented a little stone cottage on the island. Schwitters returned here in 1932, rented the same cottage and spent every summer here until 1939. During these years, he transformed the interior of the cottage into a work of art, a Merzbau, along the lines of the installations that he had created in Hanover and at Lysaker. But ever since Schwitters was forced to flee from Norway in 1940, the cottage has gradually decayed. As several interesting and valuable elements have survived, and as Schwitters' three other Merzbau constructions in Hanover, Lysaker and England respectively have been lost, these "remains" are of great national and international interest and importance and will now be preserved for posterity.

Conservation of the work of art in the cottage itself on Hjertøya would not be a viable alternative, so the interior will therefore be consolidated, conserved and moved to The Romsdal Museum, where it will be permanently exhibited in the museum's new building, scheduled for completion in 2013. The cottage itself will remain on the island of Hjertøya, where a new information exhibition will be set up in the barn. A major publication about this project and Kurt Schwitters' works will also be produced in this connection.

New Schwitters' works to Norway

There are currently only two works by Kurt Schwitters in public ownership in Norway. An important part of the Kurt Schwitters' project is to remedy this situation by acquiring other works by the artist: naturalistic pictures created in Norway, abstract pictures and collages. Under the auspices of The Sparebank Foundation DnBNOR, the aim is to build up a collection which will be put on exhibition in the permanent Kurt Schwitters' room at The Henie Onstad Art Centre.

Taken individually and in combination, these projects are of great national significance. It is important that we take responsibility for the management of our cultural treasures. The projects will be implemented using the resources of the two museums, supplemented by funds from The Sparebank Foundation DnBNOR. Work on the island of Hjertøya will commence this summer, and the Kurt Schwitters' room at Høvikodden will be opened to the public at the end of September this year.

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