

Press release

*Per Kirkeby The Crucial Years*

08.10 – 27.11.2021

In the gallery, Kirkeby's early work has engaged us for many years. It is therefore a great pleasure to be able to present this exhibition of works from 1963 - 1977, a number of which have never been exhibited before.

The works in the exhibition have been selected so as to guide the viewer through Kirkeby's various painting methods. The encounter between minimalism and the expressive precedes Per's use of pop icons, to meet at last in a room containing his classic picket fence paintings. In the accompanying catalogue, Pernille Albrethsen writes:

*"Young Per is a refreshing encounter. Many of the masonites are so open and ungainly, pulling in so many directions, that the wielder of the brush barely seems able to control himself. Several are so searching that they border on the private. But that's the price a canonical artist has to pay: even his early sketches are dragged into the light. All the same, these pictures reveal something valuable about how it all began, and we would not want to be without them. ... Nowhere else in his work does he leave the door open as much as he does right here."*

The exhibition takes us back to Copenhagen in the 60s and 70s, when Per Kirkeby began to experiment with, challenge and explore painting. The works in the exhibition are created both on masonite in the standard format of 122 x 122 cm and on the so-called crooked, cracked or broken masonite pieces.

This is a very dynamic and experimental approach to painting. The range of colors is huge – from screaming yellow colors to muted earth tones – and presented with great energy, enthusiasm and drive, all of it headed towards the establishment of the imagery Per Kirkeby employed for the rest of his life. It was precisely in the 60s and 70s that Kirkeby formulated his entire vocabulary, i.e. rocks, forest, cabin, mountains and more, motifs that we can recognize throughout his oeuvre, from that period to his final works.