

# Galleri Riis

Olav Christopher Jenssen

*Begleiter*

September 20 – November 02, 2024

We are pleased to announce an exhibition of new and recent works by longstanding gallery artist Olav Christopher Jenssen (b. 1954). For Jenssen, who turned 70 this April, the past year has been challenging, but also remarkably prolific and artistically flourishing. The exhibition *Begleiter* will present new works across mediums; fifty ceramic sculptures, eighty works on paper and five large paintings. This will be his 20th exhibition with the gallery.

In the winter of 2023, Olav Christopher Jenssen suffered a stroke which caused permanent damage to his vision. At the time, he was busy preparing his studio to start work on a new series of large paintings, but impeded by his reduced vision, the canvases were put on hold for an indefinite period. In the early stage of convalescence, he intuitively turned to clay and started building and shaping ceramic sculptures, all varying in size and complexity, but easily identified as a family of mysterious personalities and habitats, evoking a hidden fairytale world. Entitled *Begleiter*, the German word for companion, their highly saturated glazes span from shades of brown and black to bright pastels and mineral hues.

Parallel to his work with the ceramics, Jenssen gradually picked up his *Journal* series of mixed media drawings on paper, a body of work that has been ongoing since 1986 and, when seen together, reads like a diary of his artistic life. The works made over the past year show a multitude of imagery and styles, from monochrome line drawings to richly textured and vibrantly coloured compositions made with various crayons, pastels and watercolor. This exhibition also marks the publication of *Journal Vol. 08*, a new book featuring a selection of recent works from the series published by Buchkunst Kleinheinrich in collaboration with Galleri Riis. The *Journal* book-series has become an important part of Jenssen's oeuvre and display his longstanding interest in designing and illustrating publications, both his own as well as for several leading contemporary and modern Scandinavian writers published by Kleinheinrich in Germany.

Early this year, Jenssen returned to his large canvases and has now completed a suite of 4 paintings, in a series entitled *A Day Behind* executed with oil on canvas, all in a duo-chromatic style, with fine laces and bursts of white oil paint over a deep cadmium red ground. The exhibition *Begleiter* is a materialization of how, for Olav Christopher Jenssen, artistic endeavours are persistent – or in his own words: “simply an ongoing thing” – also when life takes unexpected turns.

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Olav Christopher Jenssen (b. 1954 Sortland, Norway) is one of the foremost artists of his generation from the Nordic countries and has gained international recognition for his distinctive and multifaceted paintings, as well as for his idiosyncratic sculptures. His production includes drawing, watercolor, graphic works, book illustration and publications. Working simultaneously with multiple series and mediums, Jenssen alternates between the different works mentally and physically; from informal and rapidly painted pictures to more strict and formal paintings, in very large as well as intimate formats. Always exploring and adopting new methods and techniques, his works contain both continuity and diversity, therein emerging a rich visual vocabulary. The paintings open up a philosophical space for dialogue and reflection, encouraging the viewer to unveil strata of paint and decipher cryptic symbols, as on a journey through the history of abstract painting. Jenssen has over the years produced several public commissions ranging from murals and wall reliefs to freestanding monumental sculptures.

Jenssen lives and works in Berlin and in Lya, Sweden. He was appointed professor at Hochschule für Bildende Künste in Hamburg in 1996, and has since 2007 held a professorship at Hochschule für Bildende Künste Braunschweig in Germany. He is represented in important public collections, including the Museum of Modern Art, New York, Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Astrup Fearnley Museum, Oslo, Centre Pompidou, Paris, Kunstmuseum Bonn, Kiasma, Helsinki, Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin, Marta Herford, Germany and The National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design in Oslo. He has had major exhibitions at the Astrup Fearnley Museum of Modern Art, Oslo, Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki, and Kunstmuseum Bonn, Germany. Recent exhibitions include «Enigma» Marta Herford, Germany, «Journal – works on paper 1979-2012» Henie Onstad Art Centre, Høvikodden, Norway, «Olav Christopher Jenssen» Saarlandmuseum, Saarbrücken, Germany, «Estragon» Sprengel Museum, Hannover, Germany. In 2019, the Astrup Fearnley Museum in Oslo featured an impressive display of his works in the museums' collection.