

Press Release: The Exhibition "*In dialogue with J. F. Willumsen* "

Exhibition Period: 26.10 – 14.12.2024

Participating Artists:

**Anna Bjerger // AK Dolven // Emily Gernild // Chantal Joffe // J. F. Willumsen // Martha Hviid // Eva Schlegel // Janaina Tschäpe**

Over the past 25 years, Galleri Bo Bjergergaard has cultivated a deep fascination with the remarkable artistry of J.F. Willumsen (1853–1958). This passion has led to a significant collection of his works, now presented in the exhibition Meeting J.F. Willumsen.

In conjunction with the exhibition, the gallery has invited seven acclaimed contemporary artists—Anna Bjerger, A K Dolven, Emily Gernild, Chantal Joffe, Martha Hviid, Eva Schlegel, and Janaina Tschäpe—to engage in a creative dialogue with Willumsen's art. These artists present works inspired by Willumsen's themes and colour palettes, which are displayed alongside selected works by Willumsen himself.

Colour is a central element of Willumsen's artistic legacy. In collaboration with the Willumsen Museum and its director, Lisbeth Lund, we have carefully chosen wall and frame colours to enhance the exhibition's atmosphere.

In 1934, in *Svenska Dagbladet*, the Swedish art critic Gotthard Johansson wrote about the evolution of Jens Ferdinand Willumsen's (1863-1958) conception of colour, "There is something abnormal about Willumsen's colours. Like a cocaine addict constantly upping his dose to the point where it would eventually kill an ordinary person." This reflects the public perception of the artist, both during his lifetime and after his death. His work has often been labelled as bizarre, baroque, extreme, overwrought, caricatured, distorted, even outright hideous. Willumsen's art is simply too much.

The exhibition is organized into thematic sections, each with its own colour palette, which the invited artists have chosen to work with. Chantal Joffe's pieces, *The Eel* (2023) and *Self-Portrait After the Bath (After Degas) IV* (2015–2020), visually dialogue with Willumsen's portrayals of bathing children. Eva Schlegel's photograph o.T. 295a (2020), depicting a rotated nude female figure, is placed beside Willumsen's *The Green Woman* (1920), where a female figure rests in nature. Anna Bjerger directly references Willumsen's self-portrait *Self-Portrait in Painter's Smock* (1933) and his portrait *Santa Margarita* (1950); Bjerger presents her first-ever self-portrait alongside a portrait of her daughter Freja. Emily Gernild's piece *Rigmor* (2024) portrays a childlike figure enveloped in soft, serene colours, paying homage to the mother-child theme. Martha Hviid has created ceramic reliefs, *String* (2023) and *Palm Licker* (2024), inspired by Willumsen's three-dimensional works, which are displayed alongside *The Potter's Vase* (1900) and ceramic pieces on loan from the Willumsen Museum. Janaina Tschäpe's vibrant landscape *Bubble Gum Mountain* (2024) engages visually with Willumsen's equally colourful *Mountain Peaks, Switzerland* (1926). A K Dolven has explored the theme of sunlight and vision since 2010, inspired by Willumsen's relationship with the sun. In her video series *I DID DO IT* (2010–2024), Dolven films the midnight sun with an 8 mm camera turned 180 degrees, so she captures her own eye with the sun reflected in it.

The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue featuring a text by Henrik Wivel, who has recently completed a two-volume work on Willumsen and his artistry, to be published by Strandberg Publishing in early November 2024.