

Michael Kvium



Michael Kvium is a Danish artist born in Horsens in 1955.

Kvium's works are seeking the corners of our culture and staging the gloomy and macabre, the moral and physical decay. His visual universe deals with the world that we live in and the dark aspects of our existence. His approach is uncompromising, for which reason his works often awake both fascination and disgust.

Horsens Art Museum

Selfportrait, 1985

'Selfportrait' depicts a man – seemingly the artist himself – who is looking out of an open window. He is gazing at a world outside rather than at the viewer. The man's shadow is seen on the wall in the spartanly decorated room. The shadow seems to be living its own life independently of the man. A curtain is blowing in the wind, thereby creating a dynamic aspect in the rather static painting. This creates a disturbing and surreal atmosphere.

The open window and the shadow accentuates a psychological division. Symbolically and thematically the painting revolves around the displaced and oppressed shady sides of man.



Selfportrait, 1985

Oil on canvas. 130,5 x 200,4 cm

Gift from Viggo Nielsen og hustrus legat 8 August 1985

Inv. no. 552

Souvenir, 1987

The painting 'Souvenir' is part of a macabre series of nine paintings, that depict a dismembered body of a woman. Each painting shows a more or less bloody body part realistically painted on a greenish surface. The series was inspired by a real event: an unsolved murder case of 1986, in which a young Japanese woman was found cut up in five pieces in Copenhagen harbor. Kvium has himself described the series 'Souvenir' as an expression of the most raw, violent, and extreme side of masculine sexuality.

Small Crap Picture II and IV, 1987-88

These small and dark paintings illustrate Kvium's humorous and provocative attitude as an artist. Selfironically he calls these works small crap pictures. This adds a disgusting touch, since the color of the paintings might associate to faeces. This is a theme connecting to Kvium's interest in taboos and how humans leave a mark on the world.



Souvenir, 1987

Oil on canvas. 46 x 38 cm
Deposited by the artist
Inv. no. D 39



Small Crap Picture II and IV, 1987-88

Oil on canvas. 50,4 x 40,2 cm
Gift from the artist 9 April 1992
Inv. no. 763 and 764



World Picture III, 1988

'World Picture III' is part of a three-piece series depicting a gloomy future in an abstract style. Thus, the paintings are not world pictures in a traditional sense, but rather representations of a dystopic world. With its geometric and organic shapes the vision of future might seem alluring at first, however a scary and deformed world without meaning is hiding under the surface.

The small angel figure placed on the frame is the closest the painting comes to a human presence. Along with the viewer the angel acts as a spectator of the gloomy world picture, that is unfolding.



World Picture III, 1988

Oil on canvas. 150,4 x 200,0 cm

Gift from the artist 16 November 1989

Inv. no. 705 a-c



Painting without title no. 12, 1990

Oil on canvas. 150,0 x 190,2 cm

Acquired 22 February 1991

Inv. no. 739

Painting without title no. 12, 1990

'Painting without title no. 12' depicts six bodily, organic shapes placed in an empty, undefinable space. The six shapes resemble the human body with arms, legs, back, buttocks, and a human brain.

The painting can be seen as a warning of what might happen if we keep acting without thought. From Kvium's point of view, we are at risk of ending in a situation, where the human kind must fight to keep the brain in connection with the rest of the body.

God's War Trick, 1991

The monumental painting 'God's War Trick' depicts a group of naked, primitive, and bald female creatures wandering in a dark underworld with their infant offspring.

The infants are carrying silver platters with colorful fruits, while the mothers are treading on the skulls, that are spread on the floor. Both fruit and skulls are so-called vanitas symbols pointing to the transitoriness of life. This theme of death is underlined in the frame painted on the canvas, that resembles black brains or other body organs.

Considering the title 'God's War Trick', it is possible to perceive the women as refugees - trying to escape death. They are fighting for survival for themselves and their children.



God's War Trick, 1991

Oil on canvas. Ca. 275 x 400 cm

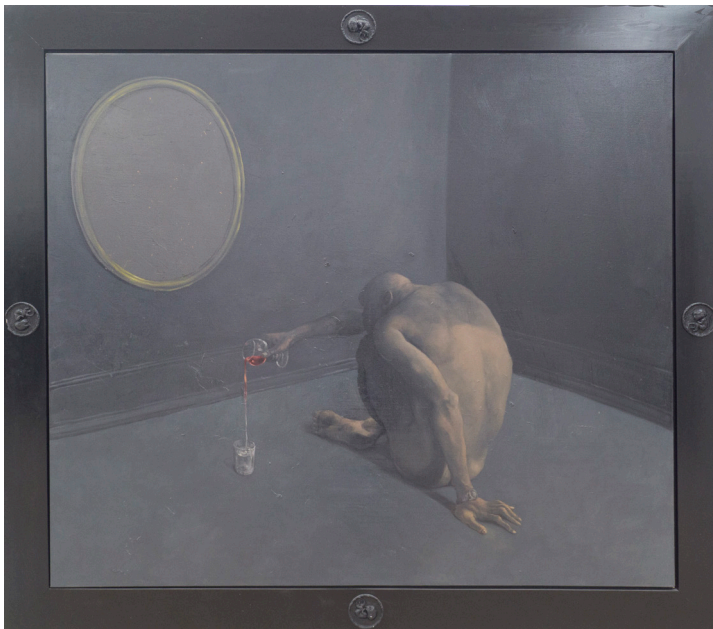
Acquired with grants from several sponsors 12 June 2003

Inv. no. 1096

The Act, 1992

'The Act' shows a primitive appearing man, who is wearing just a wrist watch and is sitting on the floor. The gray room is weirdly crooked and includes a mirror, that is not really mirroring. The situation seems strange and yet it is related to our world and reality. The man pours a glass of red wine into another glass. The wine turns into water. Opposite of Jesus he transforms wine into water.

The picture frame shows four medallions of fetuses - the ultimate symbol of life. However, the symbol is turned upside down, since the umbilical cords are not connected to anything life-giving, but only the fetuses themselves. The sprouting life is bound to eat itself up.



The Act, 1992

Oil on canvas. 189,5 x 165,0 cm

Gift from Tagarno, Horsens 28 November 1992

Inv. no. 776

The Space of the Painting, 1996–2001

'The Space of the Painting' consists of four paintings with different overlapping spaces. The narrative of the work is not unified, but divided into a collage-like compilation of canvases.

The painting contains both painted eggs and three-dimensional eggs in cast iron. As a symbol the egg is associated with the cyclical and life-giving. By making the eggs black, Kvium evokes a contradictory symbolism: the egg points to both life and death.

Death also appears present due to the deformed figure with the skull face. It is holding a bucket of red paint, resembling blood. Kvium reminds both himself and his audience that death and life are closely connected.



The Space of the Painting, 1996–2001

Oil on canvas and cast iron. Eggs: ca. 6 x ca. 4,5, gray: 130 x 110,5, portrait: 190,0 x 170,5, figure: 164,5 x 150,0, pink: 60,0 x 60,0 cm

Acquired with grants from Statens Museumsnævn 8 October 2001

Inv. no. 1069