



All Great Things Start With Blasphemy

Article by Tom Jørgensen

*"If you don't go to extremes, you don't go anywhere."
Asger Jorn*

*"Pleasure only starts once the worm has got into the fruit, to become delightful
happiness must be tainted with poison."
Georges Bataille*

*"I once stole a pornographic book that was written in Braille. I used to rub the dirty parts."
Groucho Marx*

NOBODY COULD ACCUSE LOUISE HINDSGAVL OF being politically correct. Her porcelain figures break just about every thinkable and

unthinkable rule for what we can and can't do. They emanate violence, mutilation, obscenity and a wonderfully coarse humour. All created in the material –



35.287 Grams of Obscenery. 2006. Porcelain. 300 x 50 cm.

porcelain – of mawkish Rococo shepherdesses, lovable sparrows and rosy-cheeked peasant girls in national dress.

Hindsgavl wants to throw such a powerful punch at good taste that she keeps going way beyond where most politically critical art stops. Actually, she keeps going to the point where her art consciously approaches negation and forms a contrast to 'the establishment' – a contrast that has always existed alongside and under the officially approved – a contrast where everything is turned upside down, where class differences are momentarily abolished, and where suppressed and repressed sexual energies are let loose.

In the European past this was seen at the carnival, where – at least for a day or a week – you could go crazy, make fun of priests, scholars, aristocrats and royals, and generally do as you damn well pleased. The powers-that-be put up with the carnival because everything returned to normal once the party was over. But there's always been an undercurrent, an underground, of popular satire, ancient rituals and juicy slapstick, often expressing a totally different and liberated sexuality than the official version.

Something also manifested in *commedia dell'arte*, which has inspired poets and artists for centuries.

Artists like the notorious Marquis de Sade, whose depictions of sadomasochistic sexual escapades were a major source of inspiration for the surrealists, a phenomenon that absorbed philosophers like Mikhail Bakhtin and Georges Bataille and Denmark's most famous artist Asger Jorn. Asger Jorn, who felt himself to be on the same wavelength as all the popular, raw, unsentimental, full-blooded and often anonymous creations throughout time, and made them the foundation for and utopian roots of the total cataclysm that formed the core of the COBRA movement.

Hindsgavl's figures, unlike Jorn's works, are perfectly smooth and neat, at least materially. But they have the same arresting energy, black humour and grotesque artistic effects as Jorn, and similar roots in the more or less demoniacal underground art that has always existed in the Western world. Here firmly rooted in Hindsgavl's own time. A period her animal figures satirise mercilessly. On display is our hurried stress, freezing loneliness, hopeless narcissism, and total lack of sexual satisfaction despite our professed liberation.

Which is what makes her figures a slap in the face – or a kick up the backside. They don't only go to the edge, they go over it. Wilfully and often. If you don't like – or get – their excessive humour you'll probably

face quite a challenge understanding these shiny white works of art.

That they are as popular as they obviously are is without a doubt due to the fact that many of us actually appreciate the irresistible and baroque imagination they express. The sculptures touch something deep and archetypical in us, even as we see ourselves mocked mercilessly and minutely. Despite their often macabre tableaux, Hindsgavl's porcelain figures are actually beautiful. Delectable and appealing to touch, and made with the finish of the craftsman she obviously respects. This makes Louise Hindsgavl both a respectful traditionalist and a key innovator in the art of porcelain.

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The Romantic. 2006. Porcelain.
55 x 33 x 35 cm.