



# ÅRHUS KUNSTBYGNING

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## Under the Surface

### Janus la Cour & Rikke Benborg

At the exhibition *Under the Surface* the Danish Late Romantic landscape painter Janus la Cour (1837-1909) meets the contemporary video artist Rikke Benborg (b. 1973). The exhibition presents the majority of the Municipality of Aarhus' collection of paintings by Janus la Cour plus fifty privately owned works, of which many have never before been exhibited. For the exhibition Rikke Benborg has been invited to create a video work inspired by Janus la Cour and the atmosphere characterizing his paintings.

Janus la Cour was a painter well acquainted with the area surrounding Aarhus. Based at the farm of Langballegård near the village of Mårslet, where he lived from 1888 to his death in 1909, he painted familiar scenes from Djursland, where he spent his childhood; slopes, beaches and hills on the peninsula of Helgenæs; and the sea seen from the northern suburb of Risskov. Many of his motifs were found in the area around Aarhus, and these local representations form the central point for the exhibition. A characteristic feature of Janus la Cour's paintings is the lack of persons and objects in favour of an exclusive focus on nature. This is one of the reasons why la Cour has also been called the painter of silence. In his paintings Janus la Cour continued the idyllic view of nature from the Golden Age of Danish Painting and reproduced his landscapes with an almost photographic precision. Although we experience his paintings indoors, he, in effect, offers a 'realistic' view into nature.

In Rikke Benborg's interpretation the precise depiction of nature has been transformed into a patterned wallpaper that abolishes the border between imagination and reality, both out- and indoors. The visitors are drawn into the wallpaper that with its flowery ornamentations buds and opens up with the aim of leading the way into new spaces and landscapes. Like the paintings of Janus la Cour Rikke Benborg's work is also devoid of human beings. Instead roosters and other birds strut around surrounded by trees, leaves and flowers. The constant sliding between indoors and outdoors, emptiness and nature, creates a particular and mystic atmosphere giving the visitor the feeling that the dead walls are full of life. The subdued colours, the soundtrack plus a technique that gives the general feeling of watching an old 16 mm film only add to the mystic and compelling character of the work.

Hopefully the dialogue between the works of the two artists can help reinterpret Janus la Cour in a different time and a different medium while also offering an example of the importance and inspiration that historical genres can lend to contemporary visual art.

Concerning the depiction of landscapes and nature one might say that Rikke Benborg's video work as well as the paintings of Janus la Cour suggest a constructed version of nature. Although la Cour painted with a photographic precision, his paintings represent selected sections of nature bordered by a frame and deliberately do not include human beings. In the same way – although more clearly – Benborg's work presents a constructed passage between inside and outside. This construction seems real to the visitor, who is being lead from one hall to the next.

The exhibition has been arranged in collaboration with the Municipality of Aarhus and is presented as a part of the celebrations in connection with the centennial of the National Exhibition 1909 in Aarhus.

The Aarhus Art Building would like to thank the Aarhus Stiftstidende's Fund and Bruun Rasmussen Auctioneers for support and assistance.



