

ORDRUPGAARD

PRESS RELEASE

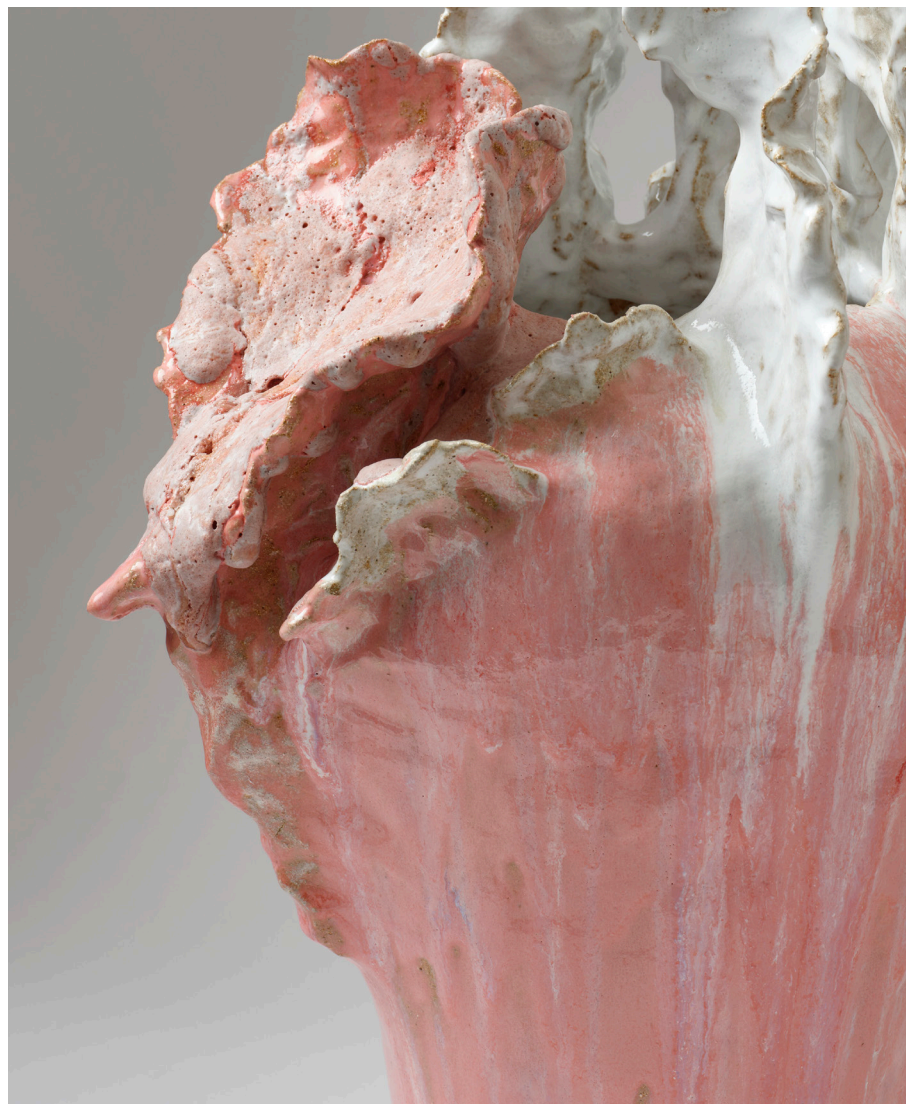
13 March 2023

Exhibition period

24 March – 25 June 2023

Press meeting

23 March at 15.00 - 16.00



ORDRUPGAARD
VILVORDEVEJ 110
2920 CHARLOTTENLUND
DANMARK
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ORDRUPGAARD.DK
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**ENIGMATIC
UNDERWORLDS
GAUGUIN AND LILJA**

ORDRUPGAARD

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13 March 2023

Contact

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Brand-new works by Klara Lilja (b.1989) introduce young contemporary art to the museum in a topical encounter with Jean René Gauguin (1881–1961), who is represented by several works in the permanent collection. The exhibition builds on Gauguin’s main work *Merman and Mermaid* from 1928, which will be moved into Zaha Hadid’s building and placed openly in the room, so that it can be viewed from all sides. The drama embodied in Gauguin’s monumental ceramic sculpture group is accentuated in the interplay with Lilja’s works, which depict existential transformations in a quirky universe of beauty and horror. The boldness used by Gauguin to challenge the elasticity of the clay and the responsiveness of the glaze adds tension to the voluptuous rivalry enacted by the two figures. We rediscover a similar boldness in Lilja’s work with the malleable material.

The exhibition's thematical approach focuses on narratives and motifs related to the underworld of oceans and myths. Lilja has created seventeen brand-new works based on the enigmatic ravines found in the ocean. There are colourful corals and sensuous starfish along with grim severed limbs in a state of incipient putrefaction and growths in the early stages of new life. Lilja finds inspiration in contemporary visual culture, for example, in the fantasy world of computer games and on social media, but also in archaeology and the rhythmic mutation of life stages. Thus, the clay is transformed into sculptural narratives with a vulnerable and existential content, opening the way for countless interpretations.

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Gauguin's fountain sculpture *Merman and Mermaid*, acquired by Ordrupgaard's founding couple Wilhelm and Henny Hansen to celebrate Wilhelm's sixtieth birthday in 1928, is also based on the sea. This sensational sculpture, described at the time as the 'world's greatest porcelain work', was originally placed in the Rose Garden, where the mythical figures were affectionately tussling for a fish emitting cascades of water from its mouth. For reasons of preservation, the sculpture group no longer works as a fountain and has been moved into the museum's winter garden for safety, where it is now placed against a wall. The audience can now, once again, experience the three-dimensional feature of the sculpture. Beside *Merman and Mermaid*, created in collaboration with the porcelain factory Bing & Grøndahl, the exhibition presents a further seven works by Gauguin, two of which derive from the museum's own collection and five from the CLAY Museum of Ceramic Art Denmark.

Gauguin and Lilja, born some hundred years apart, are both regarded as innovators of ceramic art. Although the context of their work differs, Gauguin's revolving around art deco and Lilja's around contemporary art, they share an experimental approach to clay. They both create new mythical worlds hinging on the unpredictable work with surfaces, glazes, and temperatures. This is expressed in the exhibition through vivacious marine creatures, whose power to fascinate is reinforced by the remarkable effect of the glaze.

The exhibition is curated by Anne-Birgitte Fonsmark, museum director, and Dorthe Vangsgaard Nielsen, chief curator. Klara Lilja has written a text for the exhibition folder.

The exhibition receives generous financial support from Grosserer L. F. Foghts Fond, Arne V. Schleschs Fond, Toyota-Fonden and Statens Kunstfond.



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KLARA LILJA (b. 1989)

Klara Lilja graduated from the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in 2021, and she has already proved herself to be an influential figure on the art scene with solo shows in both Denmark and abroad. Moreover, she has shown in group exhibitions at several museums in the country.

JEAN RENÉ GAUGUIN (1881–1961)

Jean René Gauguin was the son of the French artist Paul Gauguin and his Danish wife Mette Gad. Young Gauguin trained as a joiner and showed for the first time as a self-taught sculptor at Den Frie Udstillingsbygning in 1911. His ceramic works, in particular, were unsurpassed and in the 1920s, he was working at the porcelain factory Bing & Grøndahl as an artist.

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