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# gl Holtegaard

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Rita Kernn-Larsen, *Self-Portrait (Know Thyself)*, 1937. Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, Venice.

# SOLO

**Rita Kernn-Larsen**

*Exhibition design: Kirstine Roepstorff*

**AUG 24 2018 – JAN 13 2019**

**Exhibition opening: Thursday August 23rd, 5-8pm**

**Rita Kernn-Larsen was a key artist for surrealism both nationally and internationally, but her later art has only rarely received the attention it deserves. In collaboration with Kunsten Museum of Modern Art Aalborg, Gammel Holtegaard launches a major solo exhibition presenting the full range of the previously overlooked life-long oeuvre of the Danish artist.**

Rita Kernn-Larsen (1904-1998) was a major figure on the international art scene, and one of the few contemporary, Danish surrealist artists to achieve major international recognition during the 1930s. Her breakthrough was based on surrealism, a reaction and attempt to break free from the rationality and utility mentality of the interwar years. The irrational and impulsive and instincts and desire were seen as universally human, and as providing a revolutionary background for the liberation of humankind.

Kernn-Larsen's visual universe is populated by surreal, mysterious, and organic figures. She focuses on the female sex, eroticism, and the senses in a surrealist dreamworld where mouths, eyes, noses, hands and other bodily forms are usually seen floating free of time and place.

### **The Bigger Picture**

Rita Kernn-Larsen worked outside Denmark most of her life. She alternated between the art capitals of Paris and London, where she was one of the Danish artists most closely involved with the international surrealist movement. During the 1930s she exhibited extensively in Denmark and abroad, alongside artists like Salvador Dalí, Marcel Duchamp, Max Ernst, Joan Miró, and Meret Oppenheim.

The exhibition *SOLO: Rita Kernn-Larsen* includes famous work by Kernn-Larsen, but also her later oeuvre, presented here to the general public for the first time. When the horrors of World War II brought a brutal end to surrealist painting, Kernn-Larsen had to reinvent herself as an artist and shifted visual focus from her inner landscape to the mountains of the South of France. Her figurative landscapes gradually fragmented in bold experiments resulting in pure abstraction. At the end of her career she turned to collages, re-establishing a connection with the surrealist works of her early career.

The exhibition presents more than 100 works by Rita Kernn-Larsen, including paintings, sketches and ceramics from the 1920s-1980s. The extensive range of works is on loan from national and international museums and private collections.

### **A Contemporary Take on Rita Kernn-Larsen**

The Danish artist Kirstine Roepstorff (f. 1972) has created the exhibition design for *SOLO: Rita Kernn-Larsen*, aesthetically transforming the unique galleries of Gammel Holtegaard and showing Rita Kernn-Larsen's oeuvre in a contemporary light.

GI. Holtegaard's current exhibition profile focuses on the juxtaposition of new and older art and architecture, aiming to present contemporary and classical artworks that make history relevant and bring a fresh perspective to the age in which we live. Kirstine Roepstorff's elegant exhibition design is part of this, reinforcing the sensory and sensual dimensions of Rita Kernn-Larsen's oeuvre. Kirstine Roepstorff is one of Denmark's leading contemporary artists. She represented Denmark at the 2017 Venice Biennale.

### **Rita Kernn-Larsen (1904-1998)**

Born and raised in Hillerød, north of Copenhagen. Studied at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts from 1928-29, when she moved to Paris and started studying under Fernand Léger

at Académie Moderne in 1930. From 1934 she was active in the surrealist movement associated with the Danish artists' association *Linien*. Rita Kernn-Larsen's surrealist works were included in landmark surrealism exhibitions in Copenhagen, New York, Paris and London, including *Cubism-Surrealism*, Den Frie Centre of Contemporary Art (1935), *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism*, MOMA (1936-37), and *Exposition Internationale du Surrealisme*, Galerie Beaux-Arts (1938). In 1938 she was also first surrealist artist to exhibit at Guggenheim Jeune, the London gallery of the influential gallerist and collector Peggy Guggenheim. From 1940 she lived in London before moving to the South of France after World War II. Rita Kernn-Larsen died in Denmark in 1998.

### **Catalogue**

The exhibition is accompanied by a richly illustrated catalogue bringing new research perspectives to Rita Kernn-Larsen's role in Danish surrealism and addressing her entire oeuvre from a contemporary perspective. The contributors are MA Maria Kjær Thomsen, PhD in art history Ulla Angkjær Jørgensen, and the poet, author and publisher Asger Schnack. The catalogue also includes a previously unpublished conversation between Rita Kernn-Larsen and art patron Finn Falkersby.

The catalogue includes inserts introducing Kirstine Roepstorff's exhibition design at both Gammel Holtegaard and Kunsten Museum of Modern Art Aalborg. The exhibition catalogue will be published in Danish and English in September.

### **Events**

The exhibition *SOLO: Rita Kernn-Larsen* is accompanied by an inspiring programme of events, including a series of talks, workshops for children and adults, and art walks - all elaborating on the themes of the exhibition and presenting a contemporary perspective on surrealism. Surrealism can still be sensed as an undercurrent in contemporary art, perhaps in response to the rationality and utility mentality of society today.

You can read more about the exhibition programme at [www.glholtegaard.dk](http://www.glholtegaard.dk).

### **Exhibition Opening**

You are cordially invited to the exhibition opening on Thursday August 23rd from 17.00-20.00.

#### Program:

17.15: Welcome and opening speech by Maria Gadegaard, director of Gl. Holtegaard.

17.25: Journalist Birgit Meister recounts her personal meeting with Kernn-Larsen.

Guests are invited to join us on the circular lawn in front of the main building for a French aperitif and Spanish gazpacho accompanied by a soundtrack by DJ Katrine Ring.

The exhibition runs from Friday August 24th 2018 – January 13th 2019, after which it will be on display at Kunsten Museum of Modern Art Aalborg from February 6th – May 5th 2019

### **Press**

For more information please contact communications officer Nina Peitersen at [ninp@rudersdal.dk](mailto:ninp@rudersdal.dk) or on +45 45 80 08 78.

Press materials can be downloaded [here](#). Images are only to be used in connection with mention of the exhibition.

The exhibition has been generously supported by:

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