

EGILL JACOBSEN

1910–1998

48. *Green Mask*, 1977

(*Grøn maske*)

Oil on canvas, 45 $\frac{2}{3}$ x 35 in. (116 x 89 cm)

PROVENANCE: Galerie Asbæk, Copenhagen, 1983.

EXHIBITED: The American Scandinavian Society of New York at Privatbanken Gallery, *Selections of Contemporary Danish Art*, 1989, no. 6.

LITERATURE: Per Hovdenakk, *Egill Jacobsen, II*, 1985, p. 179, no. 1977/23. (described as *Uden titel*).

In various articles and interviews, Egill Jacobsen has recalled how he started painting and how he progressed to using the mask as the essential structure in a painting in which color became his most important tool—feelings, presentiments, and experiences, the actual motif.

His earliest pictures of masks were created as early as the spring and winter of 1934–1935, shortly after his first visit to Paris. He was living at the time in an attic in Købmagergade in Copenhagen. This room contained a stove and some extremely modest furniture and measured only 2 x 3 metres (6 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 10 feet). But there was space enough to paint self-portraits. So he looked at himself in the mirror and produced one expressive portrait after another.

As time went on, the pictures changed . . . “and became more summary and abstract, because color came to play a greater part, and as though in a long, slow transition, the self-portraits developed into pictures of masks.”¹

The two works in the Loeb collection, painted more than forty years later, are still composed on the basis of the physiognomy of the mask. But Jacobsen’s mask pictures are never repeats; they are variants of a single motif, explored again and again in the form of silent questions to the subconscious.

The mask, which was taken from the arts of Africa and the South Seas, is not to be associated with a specific physiognomy. “It is the face of all faces, and its function is not to hide, but to express and make visible.”²

S.L.

¹From Gunnar Jespersen’s conversations with Egill Jacobsen reproduced in Jespersen’s book *De abstrakte*, Copenhagen 1967.

²*Fogtdals Kunstleksikon*, vol. 6, Copenhagen 1990.