

EGILL JACOBSEN

1910–1998

49. *Braun Symphony*, 1980

(*Braun Symphony*)

Oil on canvas, 39½ x 26½ in. (100 x 67 cm)

Signed on reverse: E.J. 80

PROVENANCE: Galerie Asbæk, Copenhagen, 1983.

EXHIBITED: Galerie Asbæk, Copenhagen, *Egill Jacobsen*, 1983, no. 2; The American Scandinavian Society of New York at Privatbanken Gallery, *Selections of Contemporary Danish Art*, 1989, no. 7.

LITERATURE: Per Hovdenakk, *Egill Jacobsen, II*, 1985, p. 185, no. 1980/3 (described as *Uden titel*).

In an article entitled “*Samtidighedens princip*” (“The Principle of Contemporaneity”), the artist Per Kirkeby¹ maintains that there are pictures about which it is very difficult to say anything, because they possess an unusual degree of presence. By this he means that all the elements in the work are present on the surface the very moment they encounter the eye of the viewer. Therefore, the picture cannot be interpreted according to current analytical principles. The viewer cannot allow his gaze to wander around in the picture in search of some kind of action or some overriding composition. And this means that it will never be possible to understand the picture’s statement by following the course of specific lines, let alone have an idea as to which points are far and which are near on the basis, for instance, of the degrees of lightness and weight contained in the colors.

Egill Jacobsen’s pictures are like this, continues Kirkeby, and it has nothing to do with the fact that they are abstract or that their essence is distant and ethereal, “for of course the pictures represent what they are and not some historical idea—but [the question here] is the principle of contemporaneity.” Or put another way, we are faced with “the absolute development-free presence of the pictures.”

For this reason, so many abstract works have no title. If a title is affixed to a picture like this, the viewer’s eyes are led into the painting’s universe under false pretenses.

This work has no action and no development. It is not a piece of pictorial music of a specific genre; it does not even express a specifically defined feeling, although it has been created on the basis of an inner experience. It gives no reply. It merely asks.

It is therefore impossible ever to finish looking at a picture like this. We will ceaselessly be attracted by its enigmatic quality, enriched by its strange beauty and strengthened by its presence.

S.L.

¹Per Kirkeby, *Samtidighedens princip* in *Smilet bag masken en bog til Egill Jacobsen*. Galerie Asbæk, 1980, pp. 46–49.