

## **MAX FRINTROP**

### *PLAYS*

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Bredgade 28, 1260 Copenhagen, Denmark

Text by Sara Hatla

“Romanticism is precisely situated neither in choice of subject nor in exact truth, but in a way of feeling.” – Charles Baudelaire, 1846

When I first encountered Max Frintrop’s paintings, I immediately perceived them to be an ironic, tongue-in-cheek comment on the history of painting. With painting’s obituary haven’t been written several times over the past 150 years, this was my instant go to. It therefore took me by surprise when he told me that, there was no such a thing as ironic distancing in his paintings, that every stroke and every splash of paint was intended as an unmediated and heartfelt expression of emotion. In other words, Frintrop’s works are devoid of the Modernist dialectic of self-criticism and reason – at the same time they defy the skepticism and ironic self-awareness that lies within the definition of the post-modern.

His paintings seem to insist on their own presence beyond gesture; yet at the same time paradoxically Frintrop conceives painting as an emotional rather than intellectual process which implies an emphasis on the gestural. The idea that the expression of feelings constitutes the creation of art (just as philosophy is the expression of ideas) – is basically rooted in Romanticism.

Frintrop is influenced by the German artist Hans Hartung (b. 1904) whose dynamic and experimental practice evokes a powerful sense of self-expression. His dynamic compositions emerge from clusters of swift lines emphasizing the gestural. Hartung considered the forms and outlines in his work as comparable to those found in nature: “Our organic knowledge, whether it is of the flow of blood or of the force which is in a growing stem, finds its parallel, its equivalent, in what we create.” – which is essentially a romantic notion. One of Hartung’s main concerns was the translation of the inexpressible onto canvas. He used a litany of non-traditional tools, including brooms and branches from olive trees and spray-guns. Unorthodox tools are also often used by Frintrop who has a fascination for the immediate and defining moment, when the material is added to the canvas similarly to the precision that lies in the gesture of a street artist swiftly spraying his tag on a wall.

The elimination of all figurative elements in the pursuit of expressive freedom and spatial dynamism that is found in Hartung also characterizes Frintrop's work. Furthermore, the quest to balance expressiveness and accuracy lies at the heart of his artistic practice, a relationship which Hartung described as: "At the beginning, I act in total freedom. Work, by following its own course, constrains me more and more, and I am less and less at liberty to choose."

If you consider, the self-critical tendencies surrounding abstract painting, the work of Max Frintrop might seem old-fashioned or even naïve in their insistence on painting as pure, spontaneous, and unmediated expression. Yet there is something so genuinely honest about them. By stubbornly insisting on painting as expression and, as such as, a manifestation of an inner state of mind, his art is everything but trendy. In fact, by setting aside in vogue such as pastiche and sarcasm his works seem almost radical in their suggestion that in art lies emotion and a truthfulness that reaches beyond language.