

PORTFOLIO

A Tragical History

Croy Nielsen

2007

Jacob Dahl Jürgensen

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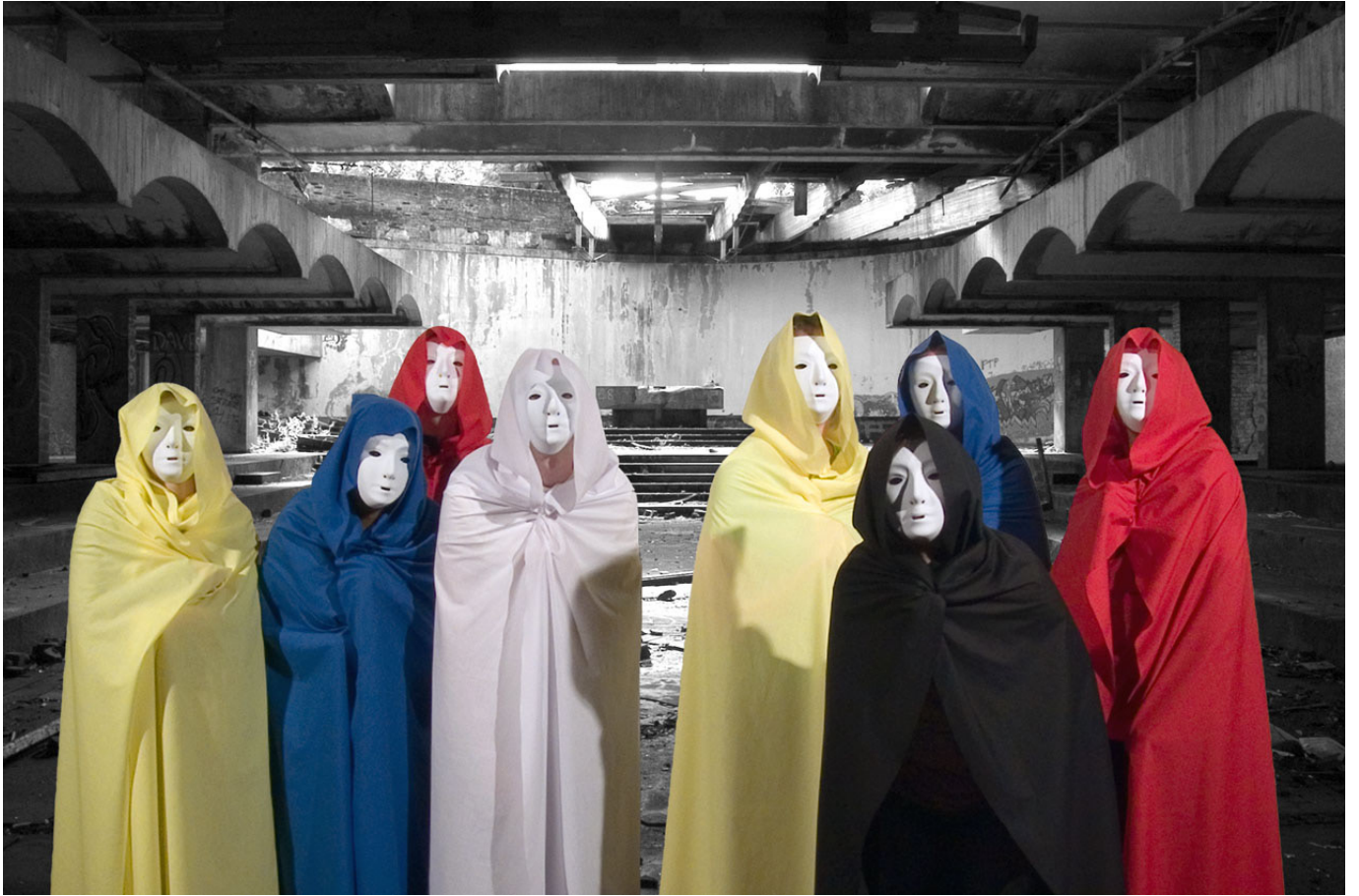
A Tragical History. Installation view. Croy Nielsen, 2007.



The Phool, 2007. Screen print and spray paint on paper. 178.5 x 78.5 cm.



A Tragical History. Installation view. Croy Nielsen, 2007.



Diorama (Motley Chorus), 2007. 35mm slide, slide projector.



A Tragical History. Installation view. Croy Nielsen, 2007.



Untitled (Hand of Fate), 2007. Collage. 27.5 x 36 cm (framed).



Brutalith, 2007. Concrete, glitter. 30 x 30 x 24 cm.



A Tragical History. Installation view. Croy Nielsen, 2007.



Cosmic Reconstruction, 2007. Reinforced glass, steel wire. 113 x 116 x 113 cm.

Jacob Dahl Jürgensen

A Tragical History

September 22 – November 3, 2007

Opening: Friday, September 21, 7-9 pm

We are pleased to inaugurate our new gallery with a solo exhibition by the Danish, London-based artist Jacob Dahl Jürgensen. Jürgensen's first solo exhibition in Berlin uses different dramaturgical strategies and combines references to myths, legends, and Greek tragedy with contemporary culture. The title refers to Christopher Marlowe's *The Tragical History of Dr. Faustus*, while the exhibition establishes parallels between this medieval anti-hero and the idea of Modernism now existing as today's classicism.

Jürgensen has often staged his sculptural works as anthropological artefacts in a museumlike display. For the exhibition at Croy Nielsen, this approach is taken a step further, as he presents new works in an overall theatrical set-up. The main space is dominated by two black, frame structures: one holding spotlights to dramatically illuminate the individual works, and another serving as a screen for a slide projection. In this way, Jürgensen deals sculpturally with elements that would normally play a secondary role as technical devices or backdrop scenery.

The slide projection features a Greek tragic chorus, whose anonymous white masks face the viewer (*Diorama (Motley Chorus)*). They pose in front of a black and white image of St. Peter's Seminary in Cardross, Scotland: a Brutalist building from the 1960s that has been reduced to a ruinous skeleton, covered with tags and graffiti, yet nonetheless imbued with the nostalgia and romanticism of an ancient ruin. This kind of premature decay is a central feature in Jürgensen's work, and the materials of the building are echoed in a small concrete sculpture presented on a pedestal (*Brutalith*), as if it were a precious relic from another time, as well as in a mobile made out of reinforced glass. The formal language of both works evokes the tradition of Modernist abstraction, just like the primary colours of the costumes worn by the chorus.

The Phool is a large spray-painted silkscreen poster with a rasterized image, depicting a scene familiar from fairy tales: a young man carrying a bundle on a stick over his shoulder, set out for new adventures. In tarot cards this figure known as The Fool can be read to symbolize new opportunities and unlimited possibilities if the card appears upright, or indecision and faulty choice if upside-down. Wearing T-shirt and jeans, Jürgensen's wanderer is a contemporary version of this figure, and on a second view his bundle turns out to be an electric bass guitar.

The duplicitous meaning of The Fool can be compared to the different readings of the character Faust, seen as either a charlatan alchemist or an idealistic scholar, whose pact with the devil is an act of well-meaning self-sacrifice. By playfully combining these anti-heroic figures with Avant-garde aesthetics, Jürgensen suggests an interpretation of Modernism as a tragedy rather than a failure.

Croy Nielsen

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