



Griegest

Kerstin Wickman

Goldsmith, Designer
and Sculptor

Guldsmed, designer
og billedhugger

Arje Griegst

Griegst

På dansk ved
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"Ej blot til lyst" maske, 1963.

2. "Solopgang"-ring, 20 karat guld, usleben turmalin, opaler
og diamanter, h. ca. 4 cm, for Georg Jensen, Paris, 1963.

7. Arje Griegst, 2007.



Indhold

Dedikation10

Mødet med Arje Griegst14

Indledning18

OPVÆKST OG OPRØR – PÅ VEJ MOD

ET SELVSTENDIGT FORMSPROG21

Barndom og ungdom24

En rejse ind i eventyrets verden48

Den første separatudstilling54

Crescendoet fanget i nuet64

GENNEMBRUDDET90

Vejen væk fra modernismen92

Nye store opgaver104

Den nyskabende smykkekunstner128

En tiara for vor tid138

Guld, som forhekser, guld som lys152

Den magiske forvandling172

Cosmos og Waves – naturens kræfter188

BRUGSKUNSTNEREN212

Smykker i porcelæn214

Et spisestel, der er skyllet op på land232

Glas og bestik skulle skabe en helhed252

En genstand på grænsen

af det teknisk mulige268

Content

Dedication10

The Meeting with Arje Griegst14

Introduction18

UPBRINGING AND REBELLION

– TOWARDS AN INDEPENDENT IDIOM21

Childhood and Adolescence24

A Journey into the World of Fairytales48

The first Solo Exhibition54

The Crescendo Frozen in the Moment64

THE BREAKTHROUGH90

The Road Away from Modernism92

New Great Tasks104

The Innovative Jewellery Artist128

A Tiara for Our Time138

Gold that Bewitches, Gold as Light152

The Magical Change172

Cosmos and Waves – the Force of Nature188

THE DECORATIVE ARTIST212

Jewellery in Porcelain214

A Dinnerware Like ”Washed Ashore” Shells232

Glassware and Cutlery to Form a Whole252

An Object Bordering on

the Technically Impossible268

THE SCULPTOR276

The Jewellery Artist becomes Sculptor278

Size Influences both Methods and Space298

A Piece of ”Nature” recreated amongst

Tivoli’s Fairytale Buildings306

At the Bronze Foundry Bel Fiore326

The Inaccessible Radiance of the Universe344

CONCLUSION360

The Spirit of the Time362

The Materials have been his Co-creators368

Portraits Reflecting the Soul374

The Constant Innovator380

Biography391

Exhibitions394

Literature397

Photo List398

English Captions399

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Dedikation

Arje Griegst har bedt mig bringe en dedikation i denne bog fra ham til hans børn: ”Tak til Noam og Lia for al den inspiration, I har givet mig gennem årene.” Og til hans hustru Irene med ordene: ”Til min kære Irene. Du har inspireret mig gennem årene. Du har været min utrættelige samtalepartner, mit andet øje og min bestandige støtte.”

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Også tak til alle jer andre, som med utrættelig møje og tålmodighed har bidraget til bogen.

Dedication

Arje Griegst wants to include a dedication in this book from him to his children, ”Thanks to Noam and Lia for all the inspiration you have given me over the years”, and to his wife Irene with these words: ”To my dear Irene. Without you this book would never have been written. You have helped me to see with different eyes.”

Arje Griegst and the author also wish to thank Bodil Busk Laursen, former Museum Director at the Designmuseum Danmark, graphic designer Mia Okkels and former editor in chief Herbert Pundik. They took the initiative for commissioning this book and they helped find the necessary funding.

As the author, I would also like to thank Irene Griegst sincerely, you have answered all my questions with endless patience. Your sharp recollection of your memories were invaluable in helping me to understand the different phases in Arje Griegst’s development.

I would also like to thank the person who should really have written this book, Henrik Sten Møller. It was you who first drew my attention to Arje Griegst’s unique feeling for design and style.

A thank you, also, to Mirjam Gelfer Jørgensen, who showed me the large news article archives in the library of Designmuseum Danmark.

Thank you Michael von Essen, who so generously shared your memories and material accumulated throughout the years.

Thank you to all who contributed to this book with tireless effort and patience.



11. Irene og Arje Griegst i hjemmet på Frederiksberg, 1992.



En rejse ind i eventyrets verden

Året efter, i 1961, begav Arje Griegst sig ud på sin næste lange rejse, først til Paris – en by, der vakte hans kærlighed, og som siden har været hans andet hjem. Han rejste videre til Spanien sammen med vennen og kunstneren Gunnar Saietz. I Barcelona opdagede han Antoni Gaudís arkitektur. ”Jeg blev stærkt berørt. Den slags havde jeg aldrig set i Danmark. Nogle år senere lavede jeg en ring i guld, som jeg kaldte Gaudí – en slags hyldest til ham,” fortæller Arje Griegst, da vi taler om alle hans rejser.

Antoni Gaudí var efter sin død i 1926 sunket ned i glemsel. De arkitekter, som udviklede den modernistiske arkitektur i 1920’erne, havde ikke meget tilovers for hans og de andre art nouveau-arkitekters bølgende og nerveprægede formsprog. I stedet var det glatte og industrielt tilvirkede betonelementer og blankt, rustfrit stål, der skulle forme den nye verden.

Modernisterne kom også til at dominere æstetikken i Vesteuropa og USA i tiåret efter anden verdenskrig. I det fascistiske Spanien bestod de arkitektoniske idealer imidlertid snarest af antik klassicisme og nationalistisk hjemstavnskultur. Franco sad på magten. Der var diktatur. Gaudí, som jo havde sværmet for det catalanske sprog og den catalanske kultur, var heller ikke en af dem, de spanske fascister satte pris på.

En ny æstetisk interesseret generation genopdagede imidlertid Antoni Gaudí omkring 1960. De var blevet trætte af modernismens afpillede kølighed. Endnu mindre syntes de om fascisternes heroiserende og kvalmende nationalisme. Disse unge var i 1960’erne internationalister og uinteresserede i hjemstavnskultur. Antoni Gaudí tilbød en friere og mere djærv måde at betragte materialer og æstetik på.

Arje Griegst og Gunnar Saietz rejste videre gennem Europa, og Arje fortsatte til Israel. Han fik arbejde i en periode som lærer på metalafdelingen ved Bezalel-skolen i Jerusalem.

Året efter var han tilbage i Paris, hvor han mødte kunstnerne Jørgen Haugen Sørensen og Albert Mertz og fotografen Jesper Høm. Han lærte også den danske kunstner og lyriker Nikolaj Fenger at kende, og de blev hurtigt nære venner. Nikolaj Fenger var dybt interesseret i religion og psykedeliske oplevelser. Hans interesse for Østen, for dens mystik og eventyr, påvirkede Arje Griegst, som til gengæld inspirerede Nikolaj Fenger.

A Journey in to the World of Fairytales

The following year, in 1961, Arje Griegst departed on his next long journey, first to Paris – a city he fell in love with, and which subsequently became his second home for many years. He set out again with his friend, the artist Gunnar Saietz for Spain. In Barcelona he discovered Antoni Gaudí’s architecture. ”I was deeply moved. I had never seen anything like it in Denmark. A year or so later I created a ring that I called Gaudí – a kind of homage to him,” Arje Griegst recalls, when we talk about his travels.

After his death in 1926, Antoni Gaudí had fallen into obscurity. The architects who developed Modernist architecture in the 1920s had no affection for the billowing and nervy style that Gaudí and other Art Nouveau architects produced. Instead it was the plain, austere and industrially produced concrete building elements, and polished stainless steel that would create the new world.

However, in fascist Spain, the architectural ideals were then more influenced by Ancient Classicism and nationalistic folklore culture. Franco was in power. Dictatorship reigned. Gaudí, who had a passion for the Catalan language and culture, was not appreciated by the Spanish fascists.

But a new, aesthetically interested generation re-discovered Antoni Gaudí around 1960. They were bored with the austere coldness of Modernism. They disliked the heroising and the nauseous nationalism of Fascism even more. These young people were internationalists, uninterested in any parochial folklore culture. Antoni Gaudí offered a more liberated and daring way to contemplate materials and aesthetics.

Arje Griegst and Gunnar Saietz continued to travel through Europe, then Arje went on to Israel. For a time he worked as a teacher in Jerusalem, in the metal section of the Bezalel School.

He returned to Paris the following year. There, he met the artists Jørgen Haugen Sørensen and Albert Mertz and the photographer Jesper Høm. He also became acquainted with the Danish artist and poet Nikolaj Fenger, who soon became a close friend. Nikolaj Fenger was deeply interested in religion and psychedelic experiences. His interest in the Orient, its tales and sense of mystery, influenced Arje Griegst, who in his turn inspired Nikolaj Fenger.

42. – 47. Tegninger, Paris, fra Arje Griegst første besøg der, 1961.
49. Ringen ”Dansk Himmelskæppe”, 20 karat guld, nederst ildopal, månesten, opal, øverst safir og diamanter. Cire perdue-teknik, 1963. Inspirationen fik han på Vester Voldgade en aften, da solnedgangen farvede hele gaden rød. Formen er inspireret af Antoni Gaudís organiske arkitektur.
50. Arje Griegst i sit ”køkkenværksted” på Christianshavn.
51. ”Gaudí”-ring, 20 karat guld, solsten og stjernesafir, 1963.







Den første separatudstilling

Arje Griegst blev i 1962 indbudt til at vise sine arbejder på Bezalel Museum i Jerusalem. Hans smykke ”Paribanus tårer” vakte stor genklang. Anderledes blev det året efter i København, da han havde sin første separatudstilling på Kunstindustrimuseet – 35 smykker udstillet i montrér.

Han blev i december 1963 inviteret af museets direktør, Erik Zahle, som så det som sin opgave at hjælpe unge og endnu ikke etablerede kunsthåndværkere og designere.

Den drømmende og sagnagtige stemning i disse værker fremgår også af det digt, som vennen Nikolaj Fenger skrev til udstillingskataloget:

Millioner af år lå de
som ukendte stjerner i uigennemtrængelig nat.
De massive bjerges stenhårde, vidunderskønne tårer
ventende på Alladin.

Underverdenens haver
vildnis af guldblade som efteråret
klaser af perler som lyserøde morgenskyer
ædelstene som hendes øjnes smægtende druer.

Med lampens ånd slyngedes rubinerne
som meningsfyldte glødende kometer
gennem rummet
opalen glitrede som solen bag de snedækkede tinder
månestenen vældede op som en dampboble fra
Hieronimus’ underverden.

Arje Griegsts arbejder var som hentet ud af *Tusind og én Nat* med al deres mystik og pragt. Nogle smykker bestod af guld hamret ud til tynde ark, af snoede eller tvundne, tynde guldtråde, af forskellige ædle og halvædle stene samt af perler indfattet i guldtråd. Der var smykker beregnet til andre kropsdele end hals, håndled og ringfinger, hvor smykkerne jo traditionelt plejer at anbringes. ”Paribanus tårer”, som jeg har omtalt tidligere, skulle hænge ned over ansigtet.

Eventyrets Paribanu var en smuk fe-dronning, som den indiske prins Achmed blev forelsket i og flyttede sammen med. Hans fader ville have ham hjem igen og sendte derfor

The First Solo Exhibition

Arje Griegst was in 1962 invited to exhibit some of his work at the Bezalel Museum in Jerusalem. His piece of jewellery ”Paribanus Tårer” (Paribanu’s Tears) was well received. However, that was not the case in Copenhagen the following year when he had his first solo exhibition at Kunstindustrimuseet (Designmuseum Danmark) – 35 pieces of jewellery exhibited in showcases.

In December 1963, Arje Griegst was invited by the museum’s director, Erik Zahle, who saw it as his mission to help young and not yet established craftsmen and designers.

The dreamy and myth-like tone of these works emerge also in this poem, that his friend Nikolaj Fenger wrote for the exhibition catalogue:

For millions of years they lay
as unknown stars in impenetrable night.
The massive mountains adamant, monstrously beautiful tears
waiting for Alladin.

The garden of the underworld
thickets of gold leaves like autumn
bunches of pearls like bright red morning skies
precious stones like her languishing eyes

With the lamp’s spirit the rubies were hurled
like meaningful glowing comets
through space
the opal sparkled like the sun behind snow covered summits
moonstones gushed forth like a steam bubble from
Hieronymus’ underworld.

Arje Griegst’s work was like something out of the Arabian Nights, with all its sense of mystery and splendour. Some of the pieces of jewellery were made of gold hammered flat into thin sheets, of twisted and twinned, thin gold threads, precious and semi-precious stones and pearls attached to gold thread. There were pieces intended for other parts of the body than the neck, the wrist or the ring finger – where jewellery is usually worn. ”Paribanus Tårer” (Paribanu’s Tears), which I mentioned earlier, was intended to hang over the face.

In the tale, Paribanu was a beautiful fairy queen, with whom the Indian prince Achmed had fallen in love. However, his father wanted him back so he sent a witch to Paribanu’s kingdom to lure the son into returning home. But after enduring a number of tests Achmed in the

end manages to remain with his beloved Paribanu. Together they took over the father’s kingdom.

Jewellery is, as we know, intended to be placed on a body; in other words, something that is constantly in a state of motion. Therefore, jewellery is influenced by light, shadows, the position of the body, and gestures. This was not something jewel smiths trained in the Modernist tradition were concerned with. However, there were other jewellery designers in the years around 1960 who took an interest in such considerations. For example, the American sculptor Alexander Calder made earrings that behaved like mobiles, moving in the space of air there is between the earlobe and the shoulder. Also, the Swedish jewellery designer Sigurd Persson experimented with the positioning of the jewellery on the body.

In the catalogue for Arje Griegst’s exhibition in 1963, there is a photograph of the prima ballerina Anna Lærkesen, wearing the ”Paribanus Tårer” (Paribanu’s Tears). Rigmor Mydtskov and Steen Rønne took the photograph in 1962. Anna Lærkesen looks like an Oriental princess. The piece hangs gracefully over her cheeks. The twinned chain of gold in 20-carat gold, looping under her almond shaped eyes, accentuates the sense of mystery as well as her seductive expression. One of Arje Griegst’s rings in the exhibition carried the text from the Song of Songs in Hebrew: ”Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth for your love is better than wine”.

Kunstindustrimuseet (Designmuseum Danmark) had already procured a hand piece made in 1962 in 20-carat gold, emeralds, rubies, almandines, pearls and sapphires. Another two hand pieces were shown at the exhibition: Gold thread in 20-carat tied or joined together into chains and rings – as into a latticed glove. The stones hung over the hand in the form of drops or bunches; emeralds, white and blue sapphires, and oriental pearls. In the piece of jewellery that he called ”Frygtelige tårer” (Tears of Fear), the stones were green opals, sapphires and pearls – like beautiful, frozen tears. Arje Griegsts techniques are reminiscent of the sort of techniques one can encounter in the Orient.

A few years later, young Westerners discovered India, Nepal and Afghanistan – hippies and flower-power followers made a pilgrimage there in search of the truth. But in 1963, the hippy movement was still an unknown phenomenon in Scandinavia, even though Jack Kerouac’s book ”On the Road” had inspired some young people in the so called beat generation to leave and go out in the world. The establishment in Copenhagen did not have much of an understanding of this kind of ”Oriental” jewellery. But Arje Griegst wanted to show the beauty of a graceful female hand, and through a facial piece highlight the shape of the eyes, the dark depth of the pupil and the lustre of the skin. Jewellery would play the same role as the semi-transparency of silk fabric, the latticed veil and the lace pattern that allow us a hint of the body underneath.

en heks til Paribanus rige for at lokke sønnen til at vende tilbage. Men ved at klare en række prøver lykkedes det til sidst Achmed at få lov til at blive hos sin elskede Paribanu. Sammen overtog de faderens kongerige.

Smykker er, som vi ved, beregnet på at blive placeret på en krop, det vil sige på noget, der bevæger sig. Smykker påvirkes derfor af lys og skygger, af kroppens position og gestus. Det var ikke noget, de modernistisk skolede smede bekymrede sig om. Der fandtes imidlertid andre nye smykkekunstnere omkring 1960, som interesserede sig for dette. Den amerikanske billedhugger Alexander Calder lavede for eksempel store halssmykker og brocher, som interagerede med omgivelserne. Hans øreringe bevægede sig ligesom mobiler i det luftrum, som opstår mellem øre-flip og skulder. Også den svenske smykkekunstner Sigurd Persson eksperimenterede med smykkernes placering på kroppen.

I kataloget til Arje Griegsts udstilling i 1963 var der et foto af balletdanseren, primaballerinaen Anna Lærkesen, der bærer smykket ”Paribanus tårer”. Fotografiet blev taget af Rigmor Mydtskov og Steen Rønne i 1962. Anna Lærkesen ser ud som en orientalsk prinsesse. Smykket med smaragder, stjernesafirer, orientalske perler og rubiner hænger graciøst ned over kinderne. Den tvundne kæde af 20 karat guld, placeret under de mandelformede øjne, forstærker mystikken og det forførelseriske udtryk. En af Arje Griegsts ringe på udstillingen var forsynet med en tekst fra Højsangen på hebræisk: *Kys mig, giv mig et kys fra din mund, thi din kærlighed er bedre end vin.*

Kunstindustrimuseet havde allerede indkøbt et hånd-smykke fra 1962 i 20 karat guld, smaragder, rubiner, almandiner, perler og safirer. Yderligere to håndsmykker fra 1963 blev vist på udstillingen. Guldtråd på 20 karat var viklet eller føjet sammen til kæder og ringe – som en gennembrudt handske. I form af dråber eller klaser hang stenene over hånden: smaragder, hvide og blå safirer samt orientalske perler. I det smykke, som han kaldte ”Frygtelige tårer”, bestod stenene af grønne opaler, safirer og perler – som skønne, frosne tårer. Arje Griegsts teknikker minder om dem, man kan finde i Orienten.

Et par år senere opdagede unge vesterlændinge Indien, Nepal og Afghanistan – hippier og flowerpower-tilhængerne valfartede dertil for at søge sandheden. Men i 1963 var hippiebevægelsen endnu et ukendt fænomen i Skandinavien, selv om Jack Kerouacs bog *On the Road* inspirerede en del unge i den såkaldte beatgeneration til at begive sig

ud i verden. Offentligheden i København havde ikke meget forståelse for sådanne ”orientalske” smykker.

Arje Griegst havde behov for at befri sig fra modernismens perfekte, stive og statiske smykkekunst. Han ville vise skønheden i en graciøs kvindehånd og ved hjælp af et ansigtssmykke pointere øjnenes form, pupillernes mørke dyb og hudens lustre. Smykkerne spillede samme rolle som det halvtransparente silkestof, det gennembrudte flor og kniplingsmønsteret, som lader os ane kroppen indenunder.

Den danske arkitekt og formgiver Poul Henningsen skabte lamper, hvis varme, reflekterende lys skulle gøre kvinderne smukkere. Arje Griegst gjorde det samme med sine smykker. Så må hver sten og perle også fremtræde med al sin lyskraft. De navne, han valgte, fortalte om tankerne bag: ”Frygtelige tårer”, ”Aurora”, ”Orientalisk nat”, ”Dansk himmel”, ”Himmellegeme” ... Der var også enkelte portrætter, fremstillet i guld, perler, perlemor og halvædelstene – et tema, han skulle vende tilbage til mange gange senere i livet.

På udstillingen fandtes også et fingersmykke (fra 1961-62), som dækkede en finger. En stor opal markerede neglen. Smykket var prydet med 120 sten. Opaler, safirer, rubiner samt orientalske perler var indfattet i guld. ”Jeg sad i køkkenet i Paris og bankede en plade af guld op og formede den rundede overdel. Jeg lavede derefter et hul til hver sten for at give lyset mulighed for at trænge igennem og forstærke stenenes farvevirkning. Indfatningen blev loddet på, inden jeg satte stenene på plads. Til sidst loddede jeg guldpladen sammen,” fortæller Arje Griegst.

Fingersmykket blev let opadbøjet som beregnet på en ung indisk eller balinesisk danser. Arje Griegst beholdt dette mesterstykke i sin egen samling. I 1963 blev det fremvist på en dansk samlings-udstilling på Cooper Union Museum i New York. Men i forbindelse med en udstilling på Kunstindustrimuseet i 2001 blev smykket stjålet en nat. Om det er ”slagtet” eller ligger gemt i en eller andens pengeskab, ved han derfor ikke. ”Det var dårligt forsikret, så jeg fik blot en minimal erstatning for materialeomkostningerne.”

Jeg mener, at i kraft af disse smykker var Arje Griegst en forløber for den kunstretning, som opstod i Holland og USA i sidste halvdel af 1960’erne, og som plejer at kaldes ”bærbar kunst”. Men de kunstnere, som arbejdede med bærbar kunst, anvendte ofte billige materialer af alle slags. Arje Griegsts materialer var kostbare og eksklusive. Deres økonomiske værdi interesserede ham imidlertid ikke. Udtrykskraften var det afgørende. Ingen andre materialer kunne konkurrere med guldet og de ædle stene i skønhed.

The Danish architect and designer Poul Henningsen created lamps, which gave a warm, reflective light that would make women more beautiful. Arje Griegst did the same with his jewellery. But even so, every stone and pearl must then be allowed to stand out with all its inherent luminosity. The names he chose tell us what his underlying thoughts were: ”Frygtelige tårer” (Tears of Fear), ”Aurora” (Aurora), ”Orientalisk nat” (Oriental Night), ”Dansk himmel” (Danish Sky), ”Himmellegeme” (Celestial Body)... There were also simple portraits, created in gold, pearls, mother-of-pearl and semi-precious stones – a theme he would return to many times later in life.

In the exhibition there was a remarkable little finger piece (from 1961-62) that covered a whole finger. A large opal marked out the nail. The piece was ornamented with 120 stones. Opals, sapphires, rubies and oriental pearls had been set in gold. ”I sat in my kitchen in Paris and knocked at a plate of gold to shape the rounder upper part,” recounts Arje Griegst, ”I then made a hole for each stone, so that the light could find its way through and amplify the colour effect of the stones. The settings were soldered on, before I put the stones into place. Finally, I soldered the gold plate together.”

The finger piece was slightly bent upwards, as if intended for a young Indian or Balinese dancer. Arje Griegst kept this masterpiece in his private collection. In 1963, it was shown at a Danish exhibition at the Cooper Union Museum in New York. But the piece was stolen during an exhibition at the Kunstindustrimuseet (the Designmuseum Denmark) in 2001. He does not know whether it was broken up or if it lies hidden in someone’s safe. ”It was not fully insured so I only got minimal compensation for the cost of the material.”

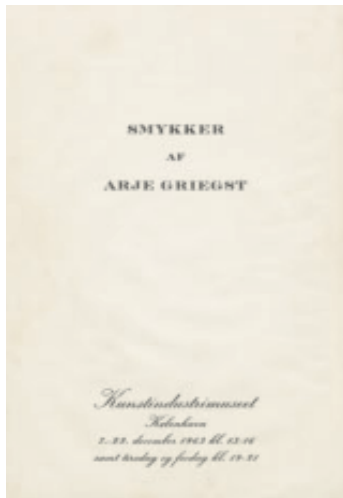
I consider Arje Griegst to be a pioneer of the art movement that is usually known as ”Wearable Art” that emerged in the Netherlands and the US in the late 1960s, because of these pieces of jewellery. But the artists who worked with ”Wearable Art” frequently used all types of cheap materials. Arje Griegst’s materials were expensive and exclusive. Their economic value was of no interest to him, though. It was the power of expression that was crucial. In terms of beauty, no other materials could compete with the gold and the precious stones.

However, the audience at Kunstindustrimuseet (the Designmuseum Denmark) was only moderately enthusiastic and the critics were bewildered. Bent Salicath admitted in *Dansk Kunsthaandværk* (Danish Crafts and Design) in 1963 that it was to a great extent ”indeed an interesting exhibition”. But the catalogue was a sad story, in his opinion, and so was ”Paribanu’s Tears”, ”poorly conceived and put together”. He questioned the wearability. He could not stomach Arje Griegst’s poster, with its ”dispersed letters” and appointed Arje Griegst the Aladdin of Jewellery Art, ”with all his juvenile pasha atmospherics and imaginative art of staging”.

Arje Griegst was however awarded a prize by Guldsmedefagets Fællesraad (National Guild of Goldsmiths). A year or so later, Karen Strand wrote in the magazine *Haandarbejdets Fremme* (Danish Hand-

craft Guild) wondering what the consequences would be. Some think that he is ingenious, she writes, whereas others believe that he opposes all traditions. For herself, she has no problem if someone wishes to experiment, but believes it would be better if it was presented as an experiment and thereby allowed to be fashioned from affordable materials. ”What can be charming in silver, copper and agates can,” she thinks, ”be wrong in gold and expensive precious stones – at least at our latitude.” Arje Griegst had managed to challenge a taboo. The requirement for easy maintenance and moderation has been deeply rooted in the Nordic countries.

At the exhibition were some rings, too, initially modelled in blue wax and then cast in gold. They were more positively received. Now he wanted to progress with that technique.



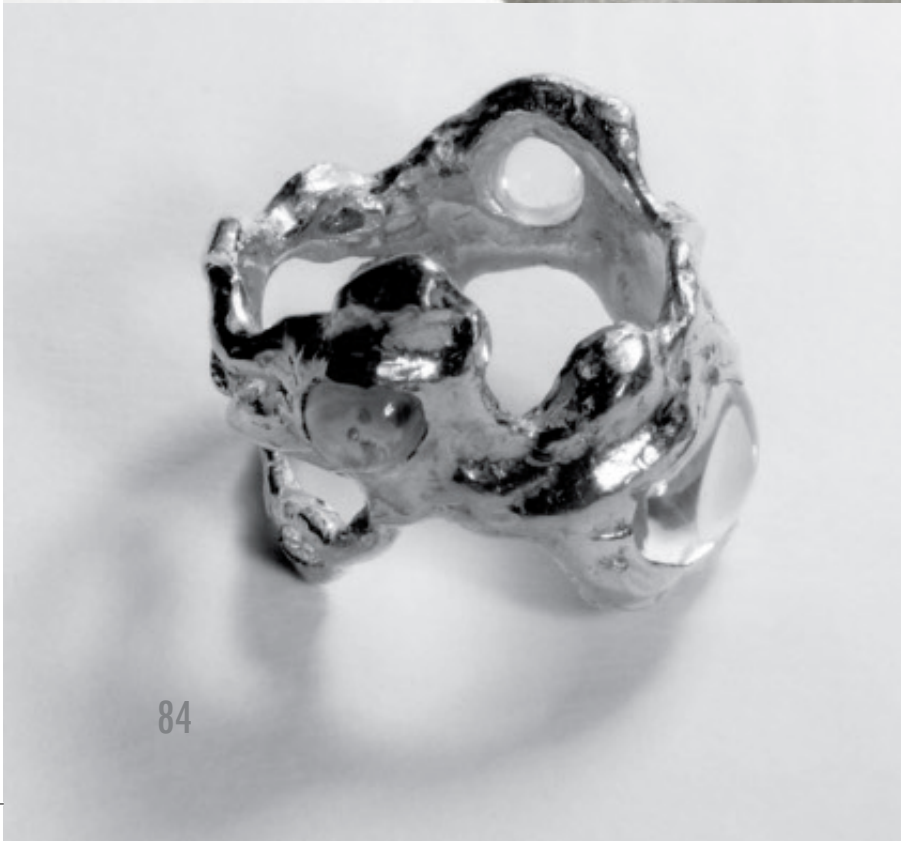
52. Ansigtssmykke, kaldet ”Paribanus tårer”, fra 1962. Smaragder, stjernesafirer, orientalske perler og rubiner hænger i en tvunden kæde af 20 karat guld graciøst ned over kinderne. Her båret af primaballerinaen Anna Lærkesen, 1962.
57. ”Paribanus tårer”, på primaballerinaen Anna Lærkesen, var forside til kataloget til Arje Griegsts separatudstilling 1963 på Kunstindustrimuseet, nuværende Designmuseum Danmark.
58. Fingerring og håndsmykke. Guldtråd i 20 karat er viklet eller føjet sammen til kæder og ringe. Smaragder, hvide og blå safirer samt orientalske perler hænger i form af dråber eller klaser over hånden, 1962. I det smykke, som han kaldte ”Frygtelige tårer”, bestod stenene af opaler, safirer og perler – som frosne tårer, 1963.
59. Udstilling på Kunstindustrimuseet 1963.
60. Håndsmykke, udformet som en bøjelig guldring, der bæres omkring håndled og fingrer, l. ca. 15 cm, 21 karat guld og blade i finguld, smaragd, rubiner, almandiner og orientalske perler, 1962. Vist på Arje Griegsts separatudstilling på Kunstindustrimuseet 1963. Indkøbt af Kunstindustrimuseet 1963.
61. Fingersmykke fra 1961-62, som dækker en hel finger. En stor opal markerer neglen. 20 karat guld, prydet med 120 sten: opaler, safirer, orientalske perler og rubiner indfattet i guld, 6 cm. Smykket blev stjålet i 2001 i forbindelse med en udstilling på Kunstindustrimuseet.

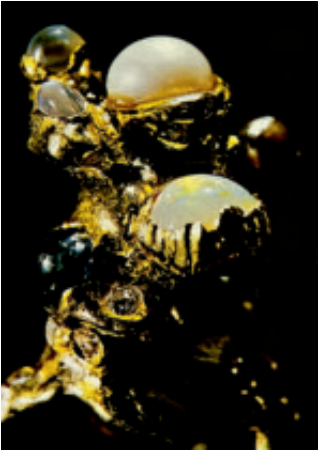
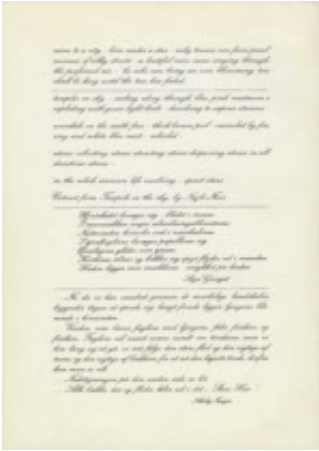
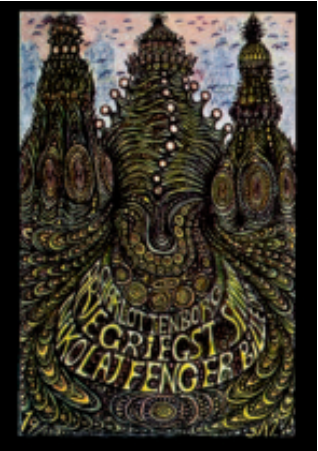
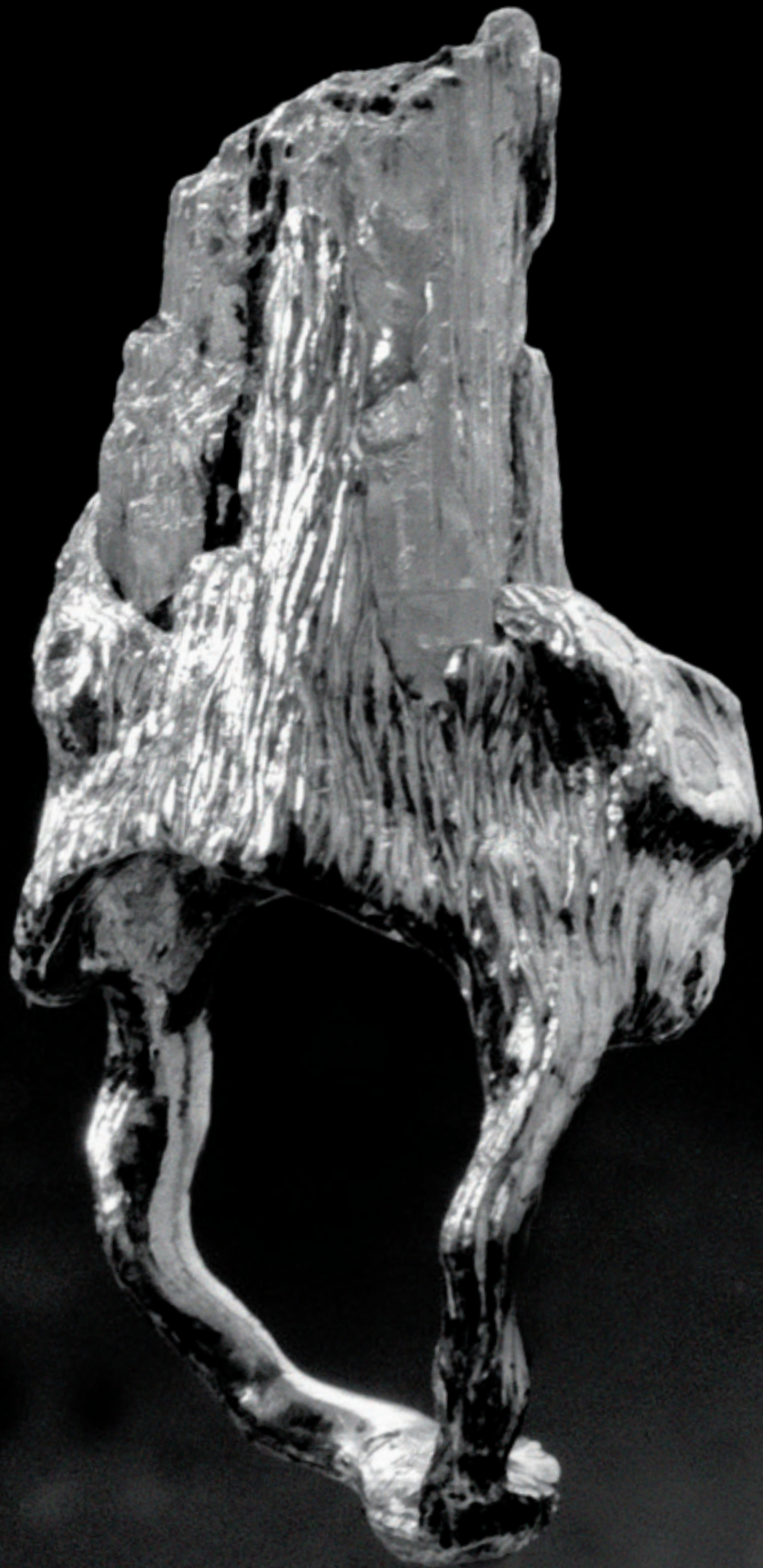






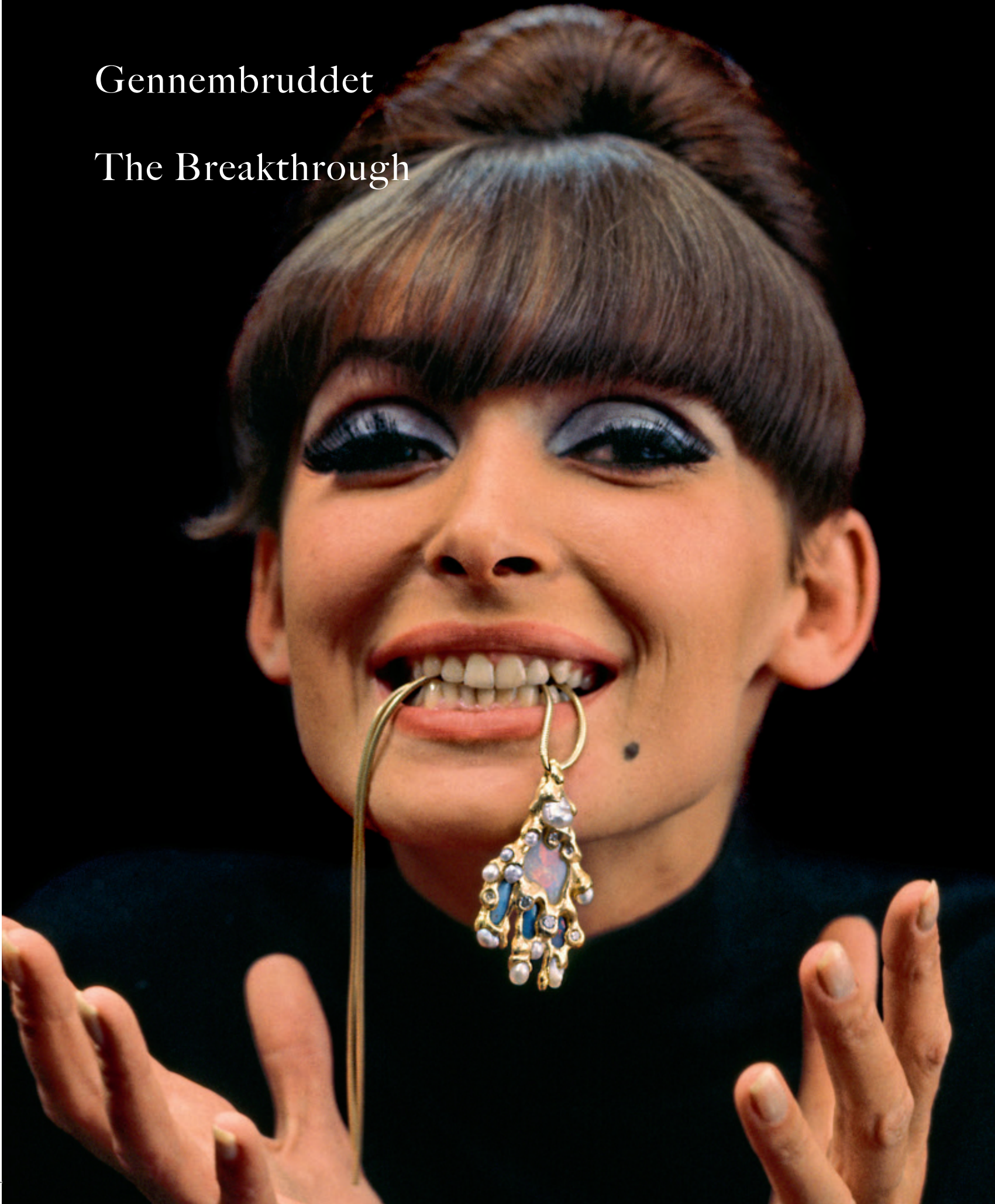








Gennembruddet
The Breakthrough



Vejen væk fra modernismen

Da Arje Griegsts fader indledte sin løbebane som guld-smed, var senjugend den fremherskende stil. Som vi ved, blev det imidlertid modernismens formsprog, der senere blev antaget i Skandinavien. Det fik en stærkere forankring blandt arkitekter og designere end inden for kunstner- og kunsthåndværkskredse, hvor der opstod en modretning i årene omkring 1960.

Rundtomkring i verden genopdagede en ung generation af kunstnere og kunsthåndværkere den af modernismen så uglesete art nouveau-stil. Den åbnede for en frigørelse fra modernismens abstraktion og kølige rationalisme. Modernismens afstandtagen fra det ”rå” og ”grimme” og den ”vilde” natur havde skabt en modvirkning. Nu ville man åbenbare materialernes egne udtryk og vække beskuerens spontane følelser.

Kunsthåndværkerne opdagede skønhedsværdien i det grove stengods, i det uglaserede ler, i tykke tekstile fibre, støvede farvepigmenter og metaloverflader med forskellige teksturer. Halvædelstene, som tidligere havde været anset for tarvelige, blev betragtet med nye øjne. Stenene blev slebet på en mere djærv måde, i utraditionelle facetter og fik af og til ligefrem lov til at beholde deres ”naturlige” skønhed. Perler, som tidligere havde været anset for fejlvoksede og var blevet frasorteret, blev eftertragtede. Alt det ikke-perfekte oplevedes som mere ægte, sandt og udtryksfuldt. Interessen for tingenes symbolsprog og historie voksede også.

”Modernismens greb var ikke lige så stærkt i Frankrig som i Danmark. I Paris genopdagede jeg art nouveau-stilen, som interesserede mig mere end det kølige skandinaviske design,” fortæller Arje Griegst i løbet af en samtale i 2009. ”Jeg indså, at modernismen ikke var noget for mig. Det gik ikke at gentage det samme gang på gang. Modernismens formsprog var udtømt.” I Paris kunne han se værker af René Lalique, en af forrige århundredskiftes store nyskabere inden for smykkekunsten. Lalique var en mester i spændstige, nervøse kurver, bølgende overflader og sensuelle farvemøder. Trods det lille format lykkedes det ham at lade sit værk med en stærk, ofte skæbnesvanger dramatik. En kamp på liv og død.

Men til forskel fra Lalique, som gengav virkelige biller, blomster, vækster og kvinder, ville Arje Griegst fange den

The Road Away from Modernism

At the time Arje Griegst’s father had begun his career as a goldsmith, the Late Jugend style reigned supreme. As we know, however, it was Modernism that became the dominant style in Scandinavia. The reaction against Modernism was stronger amongst young artists and craftsmen in the years around 1960 than among architects and designers.

Around the Western world a young generation of artists and craftsmen rediscovered the Art Nouveau style so disliked by the modernists. Modernism’s rejection of the ”raw” and the ”cruel” and the ”wild” nature had generated a backlash. Now craftsmen would reveal the materials’ own expressions and arouse the viewer’s spontaneous feelings. Craftsmen discovered the aesthetic values of rough stoneware, unglazed clay, thick textile fibres and paint pigment texture, metal surfaces with a variety of textures. Semi-precious stones, hitherto considered to be simple, were seen in a new light. The stones were cut more daringly and sometimes left to keep their ”natural” beauty. Pearls that would previously have been considered defective and thus rejected became sought after. All that was imperfect now felt more genuine, true and expressive. The fascination for symbols and history also grew.

”The grip of Modernism was not as firm in France as it was in Denmark. In Paris, I rediscovered the Art Nouveau style, which fascinated me more than the cool, Scandinavian design,” recounts Arje Griegst during one of my interviews with him in 2009. ”I realised that Modernism held no attraction for me. It was not possible to repeat the same thing over and over again. Modernism’s style was exhausted.”

In Paris, he could see works by René Lalique, one of the great innovators in jewellery art at the turn of the 20th century. Lalique was a master of vigorous, nervy curves, billowing surfaces and sensual colour combinations. Despite the small format, he managed to charge his work with intense, often fateful drama. A life-and-death struggle.

But unlike Lalique, who depicted realistic beetles, flowers, plants and women, Arje Griegst wanted to capture expressive and spontaneous feeling – the moment itself. The names of the rings ”Rosa måne” (Pink Moon), ”Solopgangssøjlen” (The Sunrise Pillar), ”Rød komet” (Red Comet) and ”Cosmos” (Cosmos) show his fascination with space and the universe. If Lalique was attracted to the insect world, by what was happening on the ground and under the surface, then Arje Griegst’s perspective was a different, more unbounded, more infinite one.

Arje has had a very personal and liberal relationship with his inspirational sources. The similarities have existed at a deeper level. Like the Spanish architect Antoni Gaudí, he has stretched the materials and techniques to their extreme limit. Both of them have had an affection for the giddy and non-traditional encounter between different materials,

and for the terrifying and painful. And they have had a passionate, almost self-destructive relationship with their work. But the visible results are clearly different.

A news article in 1967 describes Arje Griegst’s new jewellery work, in which he uses the human face as a subject: ”a new necklace that is downright frightful. A melting face with eyes and mouth as holes of dark opals [---] a fantastically technical work, modelled in wax, cast in thick 20-carat gold, acidified, chased and polished.”

The work on these pieces of jewellery from 1965–67 can be seen as an invocation of the fear of becoming hidebound. This is also revealed in the names of the jewellery; ”Løvtrolden” (The Leaf Troll), ”Frygteligt ansigt” (Face of Fear) and ”Nattens ansigt” (Face of the Night). The latter, which was also the last of these pieces to be made, is three dimensional and more intricately constructed than the others. The agony of life, fear of death and nightmares are part of our lives. We have to face our demons in order to be free. Arje Griegst says that the jewellery was also an expression of ”the Sixties with hashish and paranoia and such things”.

In this article he also described his interest in the ability of the Romantics to depict terror and fear: ”The Romantics see beauty and can experience the deep abysses of the human mind. [---] The Danish writers Karen Blixen and H.C. Andersen and the filmmaker Carl T.H. Dreyer had possessed the same ability.” In Austria, he pointed out, there were also many artists who conveyed a similar range of emotions, among others Erich Arik Brauer and Ernst Fuchs, whose surrealistic art continued to fascinate him throughout his life.

Other roots of Arje Griegst’s form world are the Rococo period, with its affection for the shell shaped, and the French 19th century artists Gustave Doré and J.J. (Jean Ignace Isidore Gérard) Grandville. The former for his dramatic wood engravings for the Bible and the latter for his imaginative illustrations, in which people were often depicted metaphorically as animals and flowers.

Throughout the years, there have been a number of other sources of inspiration, such as classical myths, Surrealism and especially the 16th century Renaissance and the 17th century Baroque – two epochs during which sculptors mastered dramatic curvatures, billowing lines, concave and convex surfaces. All this has however mostly worked as a transition for Arje Griegst, not as an end. What has always been essential has been to develop his own expression. ”True tradition is to do what one feels is right, and not follow in other’s footsteps – which is (just) degeneration,” he explains.

One of the tasks of art is to make the shifting currents of the time visible. Also other artists in the 1960s – painters, sculptors, and happening artists – wanted to start to convey spontaneity, random events, immediacy and change. Over time there was a willingness to investigate one’s own mental states and capacities. Fear would also be a part of this. Nothing was taboo anymore.

ekspressive og spontane følelse – selve øjeblikket. Navnene på ringene, ”Rosa måne”, ”Solopgangssøjlen”, ”Rød komet” og ”Cosmos”, viser hans interesse for rummet og universet. Hvor Lalique fascineredes af insekternes verden, af det der skete på jorden og under overfladen, der var Arje Griegsts perspektiv et andet, mere grænseløst og uendeligt.

Arje Griegst har haft et meget personligt og frit forhold til sine inspirationskilder. Lighederne har eksisteret på et dybere niveau. Hans forhold til arbejdet har været passioneret og selvforbrændende, ligesom Antoni Gaudís. Begge har de strakt materialernes og teknikernes muligheder til den yderste grænse, de har begge haft en forkærlighed for ophidsende og utraditionelle møder og har skabt skrækindjagende og formuleret smertefulde oplevelser. Men de synlige resultater er vidt forskellige.

I 1967 beskriver en avisartikel Arje Griegsts nyeste smykker, hvor han anvender menneskeansigtet som motiv: ”Et nyt halssmykke som er direkte uhyggeligt. Et ansigt på vej til at smelte, med øjne og mund som huller af mørke opaler [...] en fantastisk teknisk kunnen, modelleret i voks, støbt i tykt 20 karat guld, syret, ciseleret og poleret.”

Arbejdet med disse smykker i 1965–67 kan ses som en besværgelse af rædslen for at bjergtages og slettes. Det afslører også smykkernes navne: ”Løvtrolden”, ”Frygteligt ansigt” og ”Nattens ansigt”. (Sidstnævnte, som han udførte sidst, er tredimensionelt og mere kompliceret opbygget end de andre). Livsangst, dødsskræk og mareridt indgår i vores liv. Vi er nødt til at se vore dæmoner i øjnene for at blive fri. Arje Griegst siger, at smykkerne også var et udtryk for ”tresserepoken med hash og paranoia og sådan noget”.

I ovennævnte artikel fortalte Arje Griegst om sin interesse for romantikernes evne til at skildre skræk og rædsel. ”Romantikerne ser skønhed i og oplever de dybe afgrunde i menneskets sind.” Samme evne, mente Arje Griegst i artiklen, at de danske forfattere Karen Blixen og H.C. Andersen og filmskaberen Carl Th. Dreyer havde besiddet. I Østrig, påpegede han, fandtes der også mange kunstnere, som formidlede den slags stemninger, blandt andet Erich Arik Brauer og Ernst Fuchs, hvis surrealistiske kunst blev ved med at fascinere ham livet igennem.

Andre rødder til Arje Griegsts formverden er rokokoen med dens forkærlighed for konkylieformationer, og ligeledes de franske 1800-talskunstnere Gustave Doré og J.J. (Jean Ignace Isidore Gérard) Grandville. Førstnævnte for hans dramatiske træsnit til Bibelen og sidstnævnte for hans fantasifulde illustrationer, hvor mennesker ofte portrætteres metaforisk som dyr og blomster.

Bestandige inspirationskilder er også de antikke gudesagn, surrealismen, 1500-tallets manierisme og 1600-tallets barok – to epoker, i hvilke billedhuggerne beherskede de dramatiske kurvaturer, de bølgende linjer, de konkave og konvekse overflader.

Alt dette har imidlertid mest fungeret som overgange for Arje Griegst, ikke som mål. Det væsentlige har været at udvikle sit eget udtryk. ”Den ægte tradition er at gøre det, man selv føler for, og ikke gå i andres fodspor – det er bare degeneration,” forklarer han.

En af kunstens opgaver er at synliggøre strømninger i tiden. Også andre kunstnere – malere, billedhuggere, happeningkunstnere – ville i begyndelsen af 1960’erne formidle spontanitet, tilfældige hændelser, direkte og forandring. Med tiden opstod der en vilje til at udforske egne mentale tilstande, også rædslen. Intet var længere tabu.

”Men det tager mange år, inden en ny stil manifesterer sig. Det handler om en dyb forandring i samfundet,” kommenterer Arje Griegst. ”Verden bevæger sig hele tiden. Derfor må kunsten også forandres.”

Det nye udgør altid en trussel mod det etablerede. Det danske ”etablissement” var stærkt forankret i nyklassicismen og dens fortsættelse i den skandinaviske modernisme. Mådehold var et plusord. Der herskede en bestemt opfattelse af, hvad der var kvalitet. Den formgivning, som anbefalede, var afdæmpet, tilbageholdende, velproportioneret og funktionel. Der fandtes regler for, hvordan tingene skulle se ud. Arje Griegst var en ”enfant terrible”.

”But it takes many years before a new style manifests itself. It is about transformation of the society,” Arje Griegst comments, discussing the subject with me in the spring of 2007. ”The world is constantly moving. This is why Art also has to change.”

The new is always a threat to the established. The Danish ”establishment” was deeply rooted in Neo-Classicism and its extension into Scandinavian Modernism. Moderation was a badge of honour. A peremptory opinion on what constituted good taste and quality reigned. The design that was advocated was austere, restrained, well proportioned and functional. There were rules on how the objects should look. Arje Griegst was an ”enfant terrible”.



90. Hængesmykke, ”Brændende tåre”, 20 karat guld, opaler, diamanter og orientalske perler, cire perdue-teknik, 1965-67.
91. Hængesmykke, ”Flydende ansigt”, 20 karat rødguld, opaler, danske ferskvandsperler og diamanter, cire perdue-teknik, 1966.
94. Omtale i ugebladet Madame, 1967.
95. Broche, ”Brændende spire”, 20 karat guld og 18 karat hvidguld, opal udskåret som en åben spire, samt orientalsk perle som knopper, h. 7 cm, cire perdue-teknik, 1966. I denne periode begyndte Arje Griegst at bearbejde og forme stenene med diamant- og kaborundumbor.
96. Hængesmykke, maske, 20 karat rødguld, perler og diamanter, h. 9 cm, cire perdue-teknik, 1965-67.
97. ”Nattens ansigt”, 20 karat guld, opaler, farvede orientalske perler og diamanter, cire perdue-teknik, 1966-67. Dette smykke er mere tredimensionelt og kompliceret end de tidlige masker fra denne periode.
98. Armbånd, ”Burning spiral”. 20 karat guld, opaler, diamanter og orientalske perler, ca. h. 5,5 x 1. 2 cm, cire perdue-teknik, 1965.
99. ”Hængesmykke i jugendstil”, 20 karat guld, labradorit, diamanter og orientalske perler, cire perdue-teknik, 1965-67.
100. ”Himmelansigt”-ring, 18 karat guld, cire perdue-teknik, 1973.
101. ”Løvtrolden”-ring, 18 karat guld, opal, diamanter, cire perdue-teknik, 1965.







