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Louisiana Museum of Modern Art Denmark

I am indebted to a good friend who recommended a visit to Denmark's Louisiana Museum of Modern Art when she knew I would be in Copenhagen this year. I took the 30-minute train journey on a beautiful summer's day to visit and appreciate this brilliant art museum.

Louisiana is more than an art museum, it is truly a living space. It is a wonderful combination of Art, Architecture and Landscape.

The name, "Louisiana" is a story in its own right. In Danish, Louisiana is pronounced in a pleasant and lilting way. The original villa was named for its owner's marriages to no less than three women, all named Louise!

The current museum was founded by Knud W. Jensen (1916-2000), a Dane with a great love of art and culture and an equal affection for other people's love of art and culture. His building project on the site, after purchasing the original villa, spanned 40 years.

The Museum opened its doors in 1958, and it has belonged to its visitors, reflecting the founder's philosophy. It is built for Art and for People. The museum has a relationship with all forms of the arts – painting, architecture, music, literature, cultural policy debate and international dialogue.

In summer, the museum extends its opening hours to take advantage of the long evenings. The café behind the buildings and extensive gardens has a brilliant view over the Oresund Sound and on the clear day that I was there, it is possible to see Sweden across the blue water. The manicured lawn is dotted with modernistic sculptures.



"Walking Man" Giacometti.

The museum's most famous sculpture is Giacometti's "Walking Man" which is a view of ourselves that Louisiana aims to cultivate. Giacometti's man is walking, even though he is standing still, and this museum is definitely a place for walking, moving through the many buildings which have been slipped into the wonderful landscape. The gardens come into the rooms and corridors through delightful window vistas.

Few things are permanent in the Louisiana, except for the exquisite park where the changing seasons intervene, and the sea, which also changes with the weather.

Danish artist Per Kirkeby (1938-2018) poignantly died on 9 May this year. He was an artist of great range, and over the course of his life he left a deep imprint on Danish Art. The Louisiana has the biggest collection of the artist's work anywhere in the world. In the old villa, when I visited, there was a large selection in memory of this great artist.



*"The Hut" Per Kirkeby
1968*



*"The Regicide in Finnerup Lade" Per Kirkeby
1967*

The current display during my visit was works by Gabriele Munter (1877-1962), who lived in the United States, Germany, France, Switzerland, Sweden and Denmark. She realised more than 1,200 photographs, more than 2,200 paintings as well as thousands of watercolours, reverse-glass paintings, prints and embroideries.

To quote her "I was never interested in being just modern – I mean in creating a new style. I simply painted in whatever style seemed to suit me best. My job is to see, paint and draw, not to speak".



Gabriele Munter



"Hay Harvest" Arkansas 1899-1900

Usually Munter's work is exhibited and interpreted in connection with German Expressionism. The primary focus has been on her relationship with the Russian painter Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944). This exhibition at Louisiana unfolds all her life's work as a painter and presents the artist in her own right.

Gabriele Munter shared her interest in work and technology with many other avant-garde artists. She lived in an age of radical change, when technology was starting to play an increasingly important role in society. She became interested in these themes from 1898 to 1900 while travelling in North America. There she drew and photographed her relatives at work in the fields, as well as Mississippi steamboats, railroad structures, steam and engines and especially construction work.



"Three Women in their Sunday Best". Marshall, Texas 1899



"Little Girl in Her Sunday Best" St. Louis Missouri 1900



"Woman with a Parasol on the Levee on the Mississippi, near St. Louis, Missouri" 1900

Her photographs are remarkable for the outstanding quality of their compositions, especially as a camera in that day had to be held at chest height. Her choice of subjects is delightful and anticipates elements of the paintings that were to follow - portraits, landscapes, the domain of work and technology. She painted some 250 portraits during the course of her career.



"Head of a Young Girl" Munter 1908



"Head of a Young Boy" Munter 1909



"On The Balcony - Pisogne" 1933

Munter continued her interest in construction in Germany from 1935 to 1937, when a new road – Olympiastrasse – was being built for the 1936 Winter Olympics.



"Construction Work" Munch 1912



*"Working in the Wine Cellar"
Munch 1937*

Louisiana is a delight in so many ways, along the corridors between galleries the outside garden comes inside. More than half a million visitors come each year (Denmark has a population of 5.7 million) and many people return over the years. It is a destination, a place to go, a place to be. The museum, as per its founder's philosophy, belongs to the people.



*Looking out into the gardens
from a corridor of Louisiana*



*Another delightful view out
into a sculpture garden*



*A large Henry Moore
sculpture "Reclining Nude" at
the entrance to Louisiana – a
"meet and greet" on a perfect
summer's day.*

