

## Asger Jorn

(Vejrum, Denmark, 1914 – 1973)

Jorn is one of the postwar European artists most inextricably bound to the history of Italian painting in the 1950s and 1960s, through the experience of the *Bauhaus Imaginiste* and the *Situationist International*, which links him to Pinot Gallizio. Even earlier, he had known Enrico Baj through the Nuclear Art movement. The latter, writing an essay about his friend in conjunction with the 2001 exhibition *Le Planète Jorn*, recalls Jorn's fundamental conviction, the root of the attitude expressed in his artistic research: "Art," Jorn told me, "must communicate, launch messages, making use of strong, barbaric, violent, vandalic expressions. Art is not a flat image, polished and shiny so that the emotional acids cannot attack. On the contrary, art scratches and disturbs, it is stridency, imperfection and invention. For this it is necessary to oppose rationalism, which wants to invade territories that don't pertain to it, territories of the imagination." Much of this statement could have been supported by numerous international painters working in an Abstract Expressionist or *Art Informel* vein, but what distinguishes Jorn's vision, in his opinion, from that of many painters working in the United States and Europe at that time is the sentiment expressed in that first phrase: "Art must communicate." What Jorn could not accept about Abstract Expressionism was the idea of consigning the public to little more than a trace, the remains, or what he saw as the mere spoils of an action that, upon conclusion, risks leaving the work abandoned of poetic unity and of true expressive force capable of reaching the viewer. For his entire life he sought a new system of equivalencies between images and words, a new alphabet that he felt could be found in the comparison and comingling of primitive and mythic languages. This is also why he ended up fighting his own inclination to figuration, passing through periods of iconoclastic struggle against himself and against works he had already created.

The two paintings acquired for the CRT Collection, *Die Brücke*, 1963- 70, and *Bitter Ernst*, 1971, are exemplary of his late work, where he seems to find a new equilibrium, with colors that are violent, shrill and yet somber and which seems to be oriented toward the curved applications of paint typical of earlier, Nordic expressionist painting, which in its own way is consciously primitive and mythical, such as the work of Edvard Munch. (EV)