

**The Golden Altars & The Askov Pictures**  
Gérard Franceschi

PRESS RELEASE

**Opening: Friday 19.9.2014, 5-7 pm**  
Duration: 20.9 – 11.10. 2014

A euphoric collaboration between Denmark's probably best known international artist and France's leading museum photographer gave in the 1960'ties new life to our medieval biblical picture stories. With the artist's ability to compose a narrative and the photographer's ability, in the light/shadow effects and with a subtle attention to details, to convey the sculptures, we got a unique monumental work on the Nordic region's past.

At the invitation of textile artist Inge Bjørn (f.1925) the Danish artist Asger Jorn (1914-1973) sees an exhibition in Paris in 1960 with photographs by Gérard Franceschi (1915-2001). The exhibition showed the French photographers work for a planned book on Gislebertus sculptures and reliefs from the cathedral Saint Lazare in Autun in Burgundy from the 1100s. Jorn is so captivated by Franceschi's way to quicken the sculptures ancient biblical stories in his photographs that he invites him to Denmark. For in Franceschi Jorn sees the right partner, with whom he can start realizing his book project on the Nordic folk art that he had planned since the late forties.

In 1962 Inge Bjørn is paid a visit by Jorn and a French photographer in her home at Askov Folk high school. When she sees the photographer's pictures from churches in Sweden she realizes it is the same photographer she sent Jorn go and see in Paris. Franceschi takes out a bunch of 18x24 photos and Jorn, who here sees them developed for the first time, exclaims enthusiastically "Here is the first book. We will make at least ten". The amount of material steadily grew and soon after the plans expands and 32 volumes of "10,000 years of Nordic Folk Art" are planned.

The exhibition **The Golden altars & the Askov Pictures** in Gallery Tom Christoffersen displays 10 frames with photos from the Scandinavian Golden Altars. They are selected and composed by Franceschi and Jorn in the sixties to promote the book project. Aside from being shown a few times on Danish folk high schools in the sixties, they have never before been exhibited. They are displayed along with a wider selection of photos from the project.

Franceschi made no fewer than 26,000 photographic exposures from the Nordic churches between 1961-1965. The book project unfortunately collapsed at the time, but was later taken up by Borgen Publishing in 1995 when "Skåne's Stone Sculptures" was released and later in 1999 "The Nordic Golden Images". So Franceschi lived to see the beginning of the release of the 32 volumes and he was very excited about "The Nordic Golden Images". Today seven books in the series are published.

Franceschi's photographs still feels important and relevant to this day. His and Jorn's unique interpretations of the medieval picture stories are still moving and captivating - as the stories they convey always have been, those of love and sorrow, life and existence and death and legacy.

Gérard Franceschi (01/17/1915 in Bordeaux - 04/03/2001 in Amelie les Bains). Franceschi enrolling in the navy 16 years old and takes up photography in 1932 during his convalescence at the sanatorium after a training accident. In 1941 he starts at the Musée National des Arts et Traditions populaires, which is his entrance to a career at the French museums. In 1946-60 Photographer at Musées de France. Musée Guimet - Musée du Louvre. Service the l'architecture - Direction du Tourisme. As a photographer at numerous publications he collaborated with the French publishers: Arthaud, Hachette, Gallimard, Vanguard, G. le Prat, Les Presses Universitaire. Franceschis photographs of Gislebertus works in the Cathedral of Autun was the subject of a major exhibition in 1960 at the Palais de Chaillot by André Malreaux. This is where Danish painter Asger Jorn visits him, and they start up the project "10,000 Years of Nordic Folk Art". In 1961- 1965 he travels the Nordic countries and realize an archive of 26,000 negatives for the publication of the book series.