



Waltraud Engelbrecht (ed.)

**Erich Engelbrecht – Introspektive Bilder/Introspective Images**

With contributions by Susan Barthold, Waltraud Engelbrecht, Gottfried Knapp, João de Abreu Vares, Hans-Jürgen Vogt and Renate Vogt.

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With a film about Erich Engelbrecht by Helmuth Kohn on a DVD

Erich Engelbrecht (1928–2011) called his pictures »introspective«. He remarked on this: »The introspective image inspects the arena of the soul, the field of operation of archetypes, which constitute the fundamental pattern of our behaviour.« We are indebted to C.G. Jung for providing especially deep insights into the nature of archetypes. According to him, they constitute, in their totality, the collective human unconsciousness, and determine our actions. These archetypes become visible only in symbolic images. For Werner Haftmann such images are the works of symbol-forming artists of all times.

The works of Erich Engelbrecht, whether graphics, oil pictures, gobelins, or wooden and steel figures, appear planimetric and abstract. In his steel figures, for instance, the third dimension exists only in the thickness of the steel plates. This makes his artworks akin to folk tales. In his book *The European Folktale*, Max Lüthi describes the style of the folk tale as »planimetric and abstract«, with projecting all happenings on the level of plot. When the sister cuts her little finger off and uses it to open the door to the glass castle to free her imprisoned brothers in the folk tale *The Seven Ravens*, no blood flows and we hear no cry of pain.

Both – the folk tale and the »introspective image« – tell a story and use primal images in order to do it. This mode of action – of creating a coherence of meaning through a narrative of archetypal images such as forest, cavern, or sea that rests upon primal human experience – is described by C. G. Jung as an »archetypal programme«, a primal behaviour pattern that all human beings follow, regardless of race, culture, or epoch.

With the introspective image, as with the folk tale, the creative process must be intuitive and meditative, an immersion in the unconscious. Erich Engelbrecht had no plan or idea for an artwork, merely an empty sheet of paper or canvas in front of him; he made himself receptive, waited, and allowed himself to be guided by the images, a process that he experienced very much as an ordeal and even as a threat to his existence. He did, however, have a sense for when his process of searching was at an end, albeit without understanding the meaning of a picture created in this way. His wife Waltraud Engelbrecht would then try to »read« these images and to derive a coherence of meaning from correspondences of form and colour.

Renate Vogt

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