

VIKTOR IV



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VIKTOR IV and the 'Ikons'

by Anne Marie Huibregtse

Between April 4th, 1964 (the day he began his work as an artist) and 1970, Viktor IV has painted hundreds of old cargo hatches and other driftwood. He named his work 'Ikons'.

Henry David Thoreau

Viktor's attitude in life and therefore also his work was largely influenced by the ideas of the 19th century American philosopher Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862), who strived to simplify living conditions and needs in every way. Inspired by Thoreau Viktor led a primitive existence on his ship on the Amstel River without electricity or running water and without taking part in the money economy. He lived on stale bread which certain 'healthy' bakeries saved for him. In the Amsterdam harbor he fished up driftwood on which he used to paint. Plenty of construction material and utensils he gathered from garbage containers in the streets. Only every now and then would he spend money on buying a can of paint.

Driftwood

Viktor considered driftwood as an ideal alternative to canvas to paint on. Cartloads of old hatches and other pieces of driftwood were pulled up from the water and transported by freight tricycle to the ship to dry.

With a pocket knife he carved simple images in the wood,



which he colored with paint. The tar remnants in the old wood affected the paint he used, producing a subdued effect. White paint for example would turn into an ivory or even into a gold-like glow.

The painted driftwood with its worn out corners and eventually a thick layer of varnish reminds one of Russian icons.

Stencil letters

Texts in black stencil letters made Viktor IV's unmistakable own style complete.



Viktor worked profusely, with inexhaustible energy, often on many Ikons at the same time. He said that he felt 'like a tiger on an elephant'. Nothing could stop him.

These were the high days of 'The New Amsterdam School Of Ikon Painting' or 'VIKTOR IIII AMERICAN IKONS' as he called his work.

Frequent subjects in those years are the Amsterdam canals, the sun in all its various qualities, his own family tree, games he played as a child in New York, chess boards and playing cards.

Anton Heyboer

Viktor frequently visited the Stedelijk Museum (Amsterdam). There he discovered the etchings of Anton Heyboer that would influence his own work profoundly. He was also deeply impressed by Heyboer's personality and no doubt by his way of living. Although their relationship was often strained, Viktor's respect for Anton was total and lasted all through his life. In many of Viktor's Ikons his gratefulness for all Anton Heyboer had taught him, is fully emphasized.





Numbering

On the back of most of the 'Ikons' not only a signature, but also a number and a date can be found. All these numbers can be traced back to the inventory book, in which Viktor meticulously noted 735 'Ikons' with number, title, date and sometimes measurements.

Between 4 IV 1964 and 30 V 1966 the 'Ikons' have been chronologically numbered. Many numbers have been subdivided into the letters A,B,C etc. and next to some numbers 1/2 has been added.

After 30 V 1966 Viktor changed the numbering. After that date registration began with the number 3, aiming at the third year after April 4th 1964, the day his life started as an artist.



Inventory book

After number 3.50 Viktor IV has written in his inventory book: "Most of two months spent primarily in building and moving into Galerie Ship Henry David Thoreau. This is my 3rd studio and we mark it by the 3rd numbering system by date only for simplicity."

On 28 X 1968 he writes: "A rough tally counts 700 individual pieces made since 4/64 and about 66 pieces destroyed."

Ref: Viktor IV. Ad Petersen & Ina Munck. Ed. Meulenhoff/Landshoff & The Second Quality Construction Company 1988