

In September, 2012 my friend Carl Magnus, a Swedish artist and sculptor, invited me to join his family and friends at the opening of a retrospective of his work and that of Danish artist, Richard Mortenson, at the Kunstmuseum in Tonder, Denmark. Since I had never been to



Denmark this seemed a good excuse to plan a visit. I flew to Hamburg from Paris, then took a train to Niebull, Germany, where Carl and his companion Karen picked me up. Along the road to Tonder we passed the headquarters of ECCO, one of my favorite shoe brands.



Tonder is the main

town (population 7659) of a municipality of 42000 population. The buildings in its old town center date primarily from the 17th and 18th C when it was a prominent center of lace making. Tonder was part of the Schleswig-Holstein region of Germany until after WW I and was officially bilingual until 1945.

Despite rainy weather I was able to walk and photograph the cobblestoned streets. In fact, after ten days in Denmark, always in cities with cobblestones, my four-wheel roller bag's wheels were destroyed!



One of the most ornate buildings in Tonder is the Central Halle billiard hall. Danish pin billiards is played with three balls and five small pins (skittles) on a six-pocket billiard table. The game is apparently unique to Denmark, but similar to (the originally Italian) five-pin billiards. The rococo interior of the building was special but I wasn't able to track down its prior history.



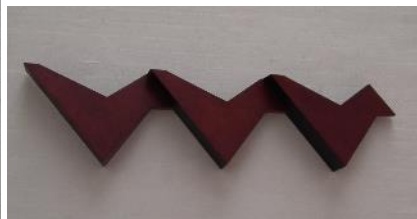


Our visit started with an elegant luncheon at Schackenborg Slotskro restaurant.



This is next to Schackenborg Castle, an estate granted in the 1660's to count and war hero Hans Schack. The castle was built in 1750. After eleven generations of Schacks, the property passed to the Crown. At the time of my visit it was the residence of Prince Joachim and his family, second son of Queen Margrethe II of Denmark.

We then had a private tour of the exhibition with a reception following. Here are some examples of Carl's work.



The next day the public opening included a piano recital by Swedish pianist, Hans Palsson, and featured a new composition dedicated to Carl to mark the occasion.



The museum of Southern Jutland has cultural exhibits ranging from lacemaking to Scandinavian design arts. At the top of the water tower there is an exhibit of the works of Danish



furniture

designer Hans J. Wegner.

There were also good views of Tonder and the surrounding countryside.



Although it was only September, winter clothing was required and this was the first time I had



seen outdoor cafes equipped with blankets.

After the two days in Tonder, the invitees traveled to Herring, Denmark and the home of Carl's friend Magnus Magnusson. There

we were treated to an amazing seafood smorgasbord and sumptuous breakfast the following morning overlooking their beautiful property. Born in Lund, Sweden, Magnusson worked in set and prop design, primarily in Danish films, the most notable of which was *Elvira Madigan*.



I then took a train to Skagen, the northernmost point in Denmark, jutting into the North Sea where it meets the Baltic Sea. I found Skagen fascinating. For one thing, it is accreting land, so about every 100 years a new lighthouse has to be built. A reproduction of the 1627 Vipperfyr lighthouse exists, which was powered by wood and seaweed. The White lighthouse operated from 1747 to 1858. The Grey lighthouse dates from 1858 and is still operational. However, instead of being located in the center of the spit it is now barely hanging on to the eastern side. So, in 1956 a new lighthouse (known as west) was built on the North Sea side.



Skagen has been a fishing village since the middle ages and today is the major fishing port in Denmark. I visited before the port expanded its ability to handle the very large cruise ships which now make regular calls.

The ecology of the area is magnificent, with salt marshes, rocks, pebble beach, and sand dunes.



A fantastic museum, Odde Nature Centre, stunning architecturally, and with fabulous ecosystem exhibits, is worth a visit. It is a museum devoted to the effects of sand, water, wind and light.



It was designed in 1989 by Jørn Utzon, the architect behind the Sydney Opera House. Under the leadership of his son Jan, it was completed in 2000. In addition to the nature emphasis there is an excellent exhibit of Utzon's architectural achievements. The flip side is the constant view of oil tankers servicing North Sea oil fields.



In addition to the joy of the natural environment, which I loved walking in, the town itself is pleasant to visit.

In the late 19th C Impressionist painters were attracted to the area by the quality of the light and the picturesque fishing activities. They are known as the Skagen Painters and their work is well represented in an excellent local museum.



From Skagen I took a train again midway down the Jutland peninsula where I met up with a friend in Aarhus, Denmark's second largest city. We stayed in a very modern apartment and enjoyed some excellent contemporary cuisine.



One of two highlights here are the ethnographic village, Den Gamle By, to which 75 buildings have been relocated from other parts of Denmark. Displays of 18th to 20th C life illustrate the



social history including carpenters, forgers, etc. in filmed reenactments of the period.

One particular exhibit of interest showed the extent of travels made by a journeyman coachbuilder Jens Lottrup from 1846-1849 across Europe. Another showed the various methods of curing tobacco and preparing it for sale.



The modern art museum, ARoS is not to be missed. Its circular rooftop provides a rainbow-hued panoramic view over the town, and the permanent and temporary exhibitions are worthwhile.



The sculpture “Boy” by Ron Mueck greets you as you enter.

From Aarhus I took the train to Copenhagen where I had planned a reunion with a Norwegian friend whom I hadn't seen in 30 years. We had a great lunch and then just strolled in central



Copenhagen. Carl joined us the next day for a day of sightseeing. I especially enjoyed the canal boat tour with views of traditional and contemporary structures and boating activity.



We also visited the Christiania neighborhood which is now a UNESCO World Heritage site. Christiania started in the early 1970's as a self-governing community of squatters on a former military barracks site and was long known for its drug trafficking. Today, however, it is governed by Danish laws. There was a middle ages re-enactment going on during our visit.



We happened to be in the neighborhood when the Danish Royal Guard marched from Rosenborg Castle to Amalienborg Palace where the Changing of the Guard ceremony takes place daily at noon, including music from the band.



Carl generously offered me lodging at his home in Lund, Sweden. Lund is a University town and an easy 45-minute train trip from Copenhagen using the Oresund bridge/tunnel that opened in 1999 connecting Copenhagen and Malmo, Sweden. We had dinner at the Grand Hotel.



We walked the university and residential areas and Carl showed me one of his sculptures.



Here is Carl in his then-studio, part of his fine collection of chairs, and a photograph of a commission completed in 2010. The Lund visit seemed to round-out the retrospective beginning of the trip.



Then it was, of course, easy to fly back home to Paris from Copenhagen.