

X-RAY EYES AND DUAL VISIONS

Ingemann Andersen, Lolland, and the Amalfi Coast*

By Tine Nielsen Fabienke

In the exhibition catalogue *Dobbeltskyner. Ingemann Andersen i Danmark og Italien (Dual Visions. Ingemann Andersen in Denmark and Italy)* (2022), the visual artist Ingemann Andersen (1929–2017) is nicknamed ‘træmanden’ (the woodman) by the literature critic Erik A. Nielsen (b.1941).¹ Nielsen, a close friend of the artist, believed this to be an apposite term given that Andersen’s subdued nature, his past as a forest worker, his preference for woodcuts, and trees being his favourite motif are emblematic of his life and work.

The writer Mathilde Walter Clark (b.1970), who only discovered Andersen’s oeuvre after his death, pays tribute to him in the same catalogue as the ‘beet maestro’. She believes that he *perceived* the phenomena occurring around him as factual and true, eventually expressing them in an artistic form where their ‘meaning, composition, and complexity’ become masterfully clear; for example, a sugar beet from the Danish island of Lolland or a grapevine from Italy.

Furthermore, it is clear from Nielsen’s and Clark’s texts, ‘Træmanden’ (The Woodman) and ‘Roens maestro’ (Beet Maestro) that Ingemann Andersen chose his motifs in the close, familiar everyday environment. However, this environment came from two essentially very different native regions. One was the flat landscape of Lolland where he grew up, worked as a farmhand, lived during the winter for most of his adult life, and returned to full-time in later life [fig.1].



fig.1

Stibankevejen, Ryde (Ingemann Andersen’s home), 1956. The Royal Danish Library. Photo: Sylvest Jensen Luftfoto

The other was the mountainous Amalfi Coast, where Andersen spent most of the year from 1966 and roughly three decades on. This was due to his marriage, in 1968, to Anne-Lise Brandt (1929–2016). Brandt was manager of the converted monastery San Cataldo, located on an eastern slope behind Amalfi opposite Ravello [fig.2].



fig.2
San Cataldo seen from the vineyard, September 2021.
Photo: Tine Nielsen Fabienke

Since the first half of the twentieth century, the monastery has been a Danish-owned retreat for ‘scientists, artists, and other intellectuals’ as stipulated in the institutional charter. Andersen and Brandt met during his stay there in the summer of 1966, and they worked as hosts at the institution until the end of 1994. During this period, the couple only stayed on Lolland in winter when the monastery was closed to residents.

Ingemann Andersen had detailed and intimate knowledge of his close surroundings, to the extent of having ‘X-ray eyes’ and, moreover, he was able to convert this into a kind of artistic ‘dual vision’. ‘Dual’ refers to several things. Initially, his creative process was split in two: he would always bring his sketch pad, but back in the studio, he abandoned his sensory perceptions, filtering, compressing, and reassembling them from memory and in respect of the nature of the materials he worked with.

Furthermore, the decades of living in two countries brought a fruitful exchange between the farm in Denmark and the Italian monastery, so that the colours and form, subject matter, structures, and patterns of one region would rub off on the other. At one time, this practice was so integrated that the Lolland motifs were done at San Cataldo and *vice versa*.

Finally, the content of many of Andersen's works is often ambiguous: surreal, enigmatic, quirky, or darkly expectant, indicating that the world is stranger and more unpredictable than most people tend to notice in their everyday lives. This could be a rendition of an entirely circular cloud, a cabbage plant's energetic profusion of leaves, a particularly gnarly tree, or the blinding radiance of the sun.



fig.3
Room With a Sickbed (his home in Ryde), 1959. Woodcut. 255 x 230 mm. Fuglsang Kunstmuseum. Photo: Ole Akhøj. © Ingemann Andersen

The move to San Cataldo heralded a new chapter for the artist, both privately and artistically. Motifs near his home on the Amalfi Coast now played a role equal to those on Lolland. Whereas, for example, still lifes, family life in cramped living rooms [fig.3], and the sugar beet harvest now gave way to grape harvest and Italian villages, self-portraits and nature nonetheless remained constants [fig.4].

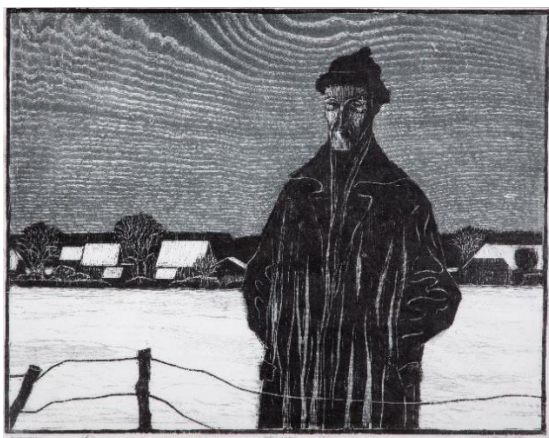


fig.4
Self-Portrait, Lolland, 1991. Woodcut. 430 x 545 mm. Fuglsang Kunstmuseum. Donation from the artist's heirs. Photo: Ole Akhøj. © Ingemann Andersen

Andersen worked with painting, sculpture, drawing, watercolour, and mosaics, however, emphasising in 1969 at San Cataldo to the newspaper *Lolland-Falsters Folketidende* that 'I'm chiefly a printmaker'. Ultimately, it proved to be printmaking and notably woodcuts – where tree structures became a guiding and integral part of his artistic expression at the crossroads of naturalism, constructivism, and abstraction – to which he dedicated the greatest effort on Lolland and the Amalfi Coast.

THE ARTIST'S LOLLAND HOME

Ingemann Andersen was born in the market town of Søllested on the island of Lolland in 1929 where his father was a master butcher. However, it was the smallholding in Ryde outside the town which proved decisive in the artist's life and work in Denmark. His parents bought the property in 1948, and the family lived a humble existence there, growing, for example, sugar beet on their ten hectares of land. After his father's death, Andersen bought the place from his mother in 1973. It is one of several farms which came into existence as a result of the Danish agricultural reforms in the early nineteenth century, when they were segregated from a nearby manor and now nestle snugly among fields and forests [fig.5].



fig.5
Fields and a forest, Ryde, November 2021. Photo: Tine Nielsen Fabienke

Using this cultivated cultural landscape as a basis, Andersen created the Danish landscapes to which he reverted time and again. A simple composition consisting of three horizontal bands: a field in the foreground, a middle ground of forest forming a darkened mountainous massif, and the sky in the background [fig.6].



fig.6
Cornfield in Windy Weather, Lolland, 1959. Oil on canvas.
60 x 70 cm. Fuglsang Kunstmuseum. Photo: Ole Akhøj.
© Ingemann Andersen

Alternatively, close-ups from the forests with the various tree contours: trunks, branches, crowns, foliage. After returning from Italy in the mid-1990s, his fascination with both seasonal changes and changes taking place over a twenty-four-hour period intensified, the horizon line was lowered, and the sky played a greater role than at any time previously.

With pictures such as those mentioned above, Ingemann Andersen took up the legacy of the visual artists from Lolland-Falster who had their first showing at Charlottenborg in the 1930s. They were mostly self-taught and with motifs such as landscapes, towns, portraits, and everyday life, they were dubbed 'Sydhavsmalerne' (the south-sea painters). Here, mention should be made of his affinity with, for example, the painter Otto Larsen (1907–1987) who, decades before Andersen, had studied under professor Kræsten Iversen (1886–1955) at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen.

THE FORMATIVE YEARS

When Ingemann Andersen arrived at San Cataldo in 1966, he had completed his education at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen, shown his works, been reviewed, and was recognised. It had been more or less anticipated that he would become a farmer or forest worker, as this was what he had been doing since finishing school. Nevertheless, his family supported his artistic ambitions.

The road to the Academy in the capital went via a drawing club in Søllested, drawing courses at the folk high school Borups Højskole in Copenhagen, and lessons from the painter Leo Neuschwang (1907–1987). Following this, Andersen was admitted to the Painting School during the period 1951–1954 under Mr Iversen mentioned above, who had received recognition for his colouring, his landscapes, and monumental figural compositions.

After the Painting School, Ingemann Andersen went on to the Academy School of Graphic Art 1955–1957 under the painter, printmaker, and Reader Holger J. Jensen (1900–1966). Jensen had an experimental approach to materials, techniques, and process, particularly in etching. In a 1987 catalogue from the museum of modern graphic art, Kastrupgårdsamlingen in Copenhagen, the poet and art critic Bent Irvé (1934–2014) stated that, to Jensen, the ‘[...] printmaker’s practice was profoundly linked to this exploration of materials.’ This also became fundamental to Andersen’s practice.

Andersen himself referred to the Academy years as ‘fantastic’ and ‘enriching’. His close student friend, the sculptor Erik Heide (b.1934), recounted how the two of them experienced an inspiring and free and easy environment at the School of Graphic Art where a number of distinctive contemporary printmakers frequented the shared workshop, including Jane Muus (1919–2007) and Palle Nielsen (1920–2020). Muus and Nielsen as well as Dan Sterup-Hansen (1918–1995) and Svend Wiig-Hansen (1922–1997) are classified in Danish art-historical research as ‘menneskeskildrere’ (portrayers of man), because they redesigned the realist mode of expression in the printmaking techniques of the 1950s, thereby spotlighting, also in political terms, man’s existential situation in the shadow of the prevailing Cold War and threat of atomic war.²

Several elements from the works of the ‘portrayers of man’ are also evident in Andersen’s pictures, where, for example, darkness, claustrophobia, and overwhelming natural phenomena can be perceived as ominous at a deeper level [fig.7]. Like them, he viewed printmaking as a democratic art form capable of paving the way to a larger audience – unlike the more expensive and hence more exclusive practice of painting.



fig.7

Figure in Interior, (1961). Woodcut. 120 x 155 mm. Private collection. Photo: Ole Akhøj. © Ingemann Andersen

Already before he went to stay at San Cataldo, Ingemann Andersen had been awarded grants, for example, making it possible for him to travel. During the 1950s, he visited Spain, Greece, Turkey, Paris, and Italy and, in the early part of the next decade, he visited Rome and Egypt [fig.8]. In an interview with the newspaper *Ny Dag*, 1962, he explained how, artistically, he approached new surroundings with great caution, 'You need to stay at a place for two or three months before you can even begin to paint it'. It is in light of this that his appropriation of his new native region should be seen.



fig.8
View of the City's Rooftops, Rome, c. 1964. Indian ink and watercolour.
Fuglsang Kunstmuseum. Donation from the artist's heirs. Photo:
Ole Akhøj. © Ingemann Andersen

FEELING AT HOME ON THE AMALFI COAST

Since 1997, the world-famous Amalfi Coast has been designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site because of its unique cultural environment, uniting unspoilt and magnificent nature with strong traces of human settlement in, and cultivation of, this dramatic terrain.

From San Cataldo's mountain slope, Andersen concentrated on few motifs, examining them serially with repetitions and variations. One such was Ravello on the other side of the Valley of the Dragon, to which San Cataldo offers an unimpeded view. He depicted the town without people, using huge contrasts of light and shadow. Here, the architecture is *totally* compressed into free compositions of differently patterned squares and rectangles, triangles, rhombi, and semi-circles in combination with the narrow ovals of cypresses and the irregular silhouettes of pines [fig.9].

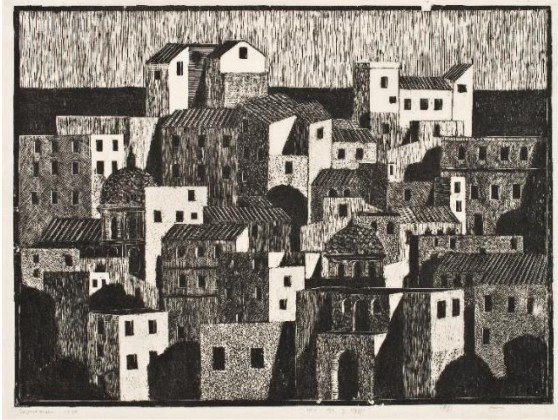


fig.9
Houses in Light and Shade, Italy. 1970. Woodcut. 380 x 520 mm. Fuglsang Kunstmuseum. Photo: Ole Akhøj. © Ingemann Andersen

Later, Andersen's fascination shifted towards the labyrinthine Atrani at the mouth of the valley [fig.10]. In an article about the artist's practice in the newspaper *Aktuelt*, 1973, the towns in the area are likened to beehives or termitaries, and the journalist noted that 'It is this mountain mystique, this architectural confusion which has spellbound Ingemann Andersen. His pictures epitomise the eternal conflict between facades, gable ends, gates, storeys, and intimate paths from one environment to the next.'



fig.10
Houses in Sun, Italy (Atrani), 1973. Woodcut. 195 x 180 mm. Fuglsang Kunstmuseum. Photo: Ole Akhøj. © Ingemann Andersen

Andersen also embraced the decorative drystone walls and terraced landscapes on the mountain slopes, the sky's wondrous cloud formations behind the mountain ridges, and, not forgetting, San Cataldo's well-appointed monastery garden with its giant pine and

vineyard. After a few years, colour woodcuts emerged in a harmonious palette of mainly green, blue, brown, and golden colours, already familiar to him from his native Lolland.

Focus changed from compact stringently geometric prospects to gradually more ethereal landscapes and organic shapes. The dreamlike sequences almost resemble stage sets, where painted planes are rhythmically inserted from the side one by one [fig.11]. This tallies with the nature of the material because Andersen's colour woodcuts are printed with one wooden plate (known as a 'block') per colour.



fig.11
Jasmine in Bloom, San Cataldo, 1976. Woodcut. 195 x 180 mm. Fuglsang Kunstmuseum. Photo: Ole Akhøj. © Ingemann Andersen

Moreover, close-ups became yet another significant motif. Already after a few years at San Cataldo, Ingemann Andersen depicted a series of peculiar stones in backlight – with a complex interplay of concave and convex shapes – whose proportions are difficult to decipher [fig.12].



fig.12
Sunlit Rocks, Italy, 1970. Woodcut. 190 x 210 mm. Fuglsang Kunstmuseum. Photo: Ole Akhøj. © Ingemann Andersen

Later, the artist was particularly fascinated by the monastery garden's ancient vines, depicting them at such close quarters as to eliminate any decipherable context, practically transforming the abstract effects into nonfigurative art [fig.13].

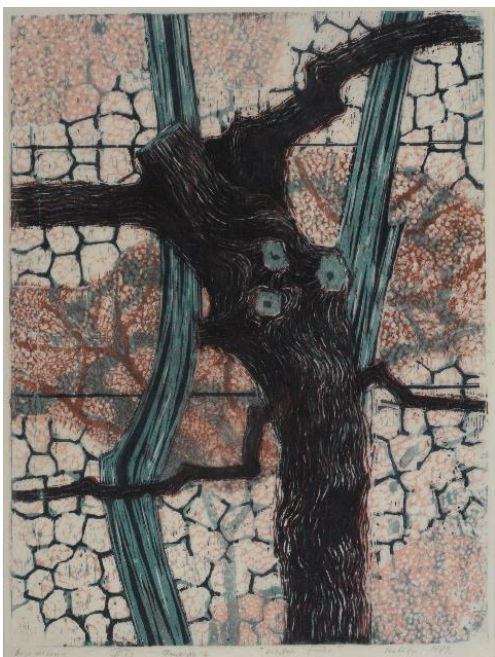


fig.13
Vine, Spring, Italy, 1989. Woodcut. 464 x 352 mm.
Skovgaard Museum. Photo: Ole Misfeldt. © Ingemann Andersen

THE DANISH NETWORK

Ingemann Andersen first took part in *Lolland-Falster Udstillingen (The Lolland-Falster Exhibition)* in Maribo in the early 1950s. The exhibition had only existed for a few years at this time but remained an annual event arranged by Maribo Art Society until 1989. It was made up of artists living and working locally, augmented by native artists now living elsewhere as well as newcomers and guest artists in a broad array of artistic media and expressions. Andersen himself emphasised the importance of playing an active part in his Danish native area; he was viewed as the youngest of the 'oldies' in the exhibition, as a central support, and a very important part of the artistic life on Lolland-Falster.

Throughout his career, he also carried out decorative work for enterprises and municipalities on Lolland-Falster via 'patrons' – directors, politicians, and societies – who offered him commissions. This included decorative mosaics for local welfare institutions, among them a school, a library, and an old people's home.

Already in 1953, Andersen had his first show in Copenhagen at Kunstneres Efterårsudstilling (the Artists' Autumn Exhibition), and he was later able to add both solo exhibitions, print- and group exhibitions to his CV. From his early years, mention should be

made of a guest appearance at the artists' association Kammeraterne's (the Friends') exhibition in Copenhagen 1962 where, for example, he showed a portrait of his father [fig. 14]. In a review of the exhibition in the local paper *Egnens Blad*, the reviewer offered this prophetic suggestion: 'Much seems to suggest that this painter explores intimacy at ever deeper levels, but he could do with travelling south to experience the magic of light.'



fig. 14
Portrait (the Artist's Father), (1960). Oil on canvas.
99,5 x 67 cm. Private collection. Photo: Ole Akhøj. ©
Ingemann Andersen

In the course of time, Ingemann Andersen also showed elsewhere in Denmark, in Aarhus and Odense, for example, as well as taking part in exhibitions abroad. Although solo exhibitions were organised at Galleri Varming in Valby, Copenhagen, in 2008 and 2010, his efforts were concentrated on his native area during the last decades of his life, such as *Lys over Lolland (Light Over Lolland)*, *Sommerudstillingen Masnedøfortet (The Masnedøfortet Summer Exhibition)*, and *Kunstudstilling LF (Art Exhibition LF)*. In the end, he no longer had the physical strength to produce the most taxing woodcuts, so he combined the technique with linocut and various methods of colouring and also reverted to the oil-painted landscapes which had kick-started his career sixty years ago.

Andersen was particularly known and loved on Lolland-Falster, where many knew of him and/or his art from exhibitions, workplaces, and public spaces. He gave priority to these activities and commissions, and they constituted a close link to his native area during the decades when most of his time was spent on the Amalfi Coast. Over the years,

his art also attracted an audience via the many guests staying at San Cataldo, and the loyal Italian colleagues at the monastery, who were practically considered family, still own his works.

LINKS TO ITALY

With his motifs from the Amalfi Coast, Ingemann Andersen continued the legacy of the many artists who had visited the place over the centuries to portray scenes from everyday life, towns, and landscapes. A number of books have been published about visual artists in the area generally, including the Danish artists from the nineteenth-century Danish Golden Age onwards, but also specifically about the foreigners who stayed at Amalfi, Atrani, and Ravello in the first half of the twentieth century.³ San Cataldo is emphasised as a significant node of Danish art and culture in the area.

Both before, during, and after Andersen's time, artists have stayed at San Cataldo – according to the institution's website, the current figure of people who have stayed there on a grant is more than one thousand. However, the guest books are not accessible to the public and the present hosts were (are) always very discretionary, so although Ingemann Andersen and Anne-Lise Brandt made several close friends among the guests, Andersen never mentioned publicly, who might have had a specific influence on his own development and direction.

The book written by the historian Kristian Hvidt from 1993, *Udsigt fra et italiensk kloster. San Cataldo i tusinde år (View From an Italian Monastery. Thousand Years of San Cataldo)*, contains a list of grant holders during the period 1928–1992 that gives a fairly true picture. A number of artists with links to Ingemann Andersen's artistic practice are mentioned, including the 'portrayers of man' mentioned earlier: Dan Sterup-Hansen, Palle Nielsen, and Jane Muus as well as Andersen's teacher Holger J. Jensen and a number of younger colleagues.

Particular mention should be made of Kirsten Christensen (b.1943), who visited San Cataldo on several occasions and whose ceramic pictures and crayon drawings dream up architecture, infrastructure, landscapes, and phenomena involving light. Besides Ingemann Andersen, she must be among those who have most persistently portrayed the monastery and its immediate surroundings. Andersen's own art collection contained one of her ceramic pictures as well as a suite of Palle Nielsen's works. They can be interpreted as indicating the artists appreciated by Ingemann Andersen and with whom he felt most affinity.

RECEPTION

Ingemann Andersen also became the subject of much writing as a result of his many group or solo exhibitions over the years. This included local, regional, and national press coverage in the form of interviews, references, and reviews. Furthermore, various aspects of his practice were treated in records, yearbooks, exhibition catalogues, and an annotated index of Danish printmakers: *Dansk grafik – gennem 25 år (25 Years of Danish Printmaking)* from 1985.

In 2014, his friend Erik A. Nielsen published the only monograph to date about the artist, namely *Modlys. Ingemann Andersens livsværk (Backlight. Ingemann Andersen's Life Work)* to mark Andersen's 85th birthday. Nielsen's and Andersen's long-standing friendship along with a number of lengthy conversations form the backbone of the text, which looks back on the artist's life and work revolving around backlight as the principal theme of form and content.

Most writers emphasise qualities in the artist's work very like those mentioned earlier in the texts 'Træmanden' and 'Roens maestro'. They call attention to the connection between Andersen's background and his choice of media and motifs, and they commend him for what they consider his special talent for representing the world through his immediate surroundings. This was referenced thus in the above-mentioned interview with Andersen at San Cataldo for *Lolland-Falsters Folketidende*, 1969: 'Behind all the seriousness, the personal and artistic reticence, Ingemann Andersen is unique, managing to delve deeply into, and beyond, the more or less trivial facts and doings of everyday life.'

Already in 1961, Dan Sterup-Hansen, who belonged to the core of the 1950s 'portrayers of man', had commended his younger colleague in similar terms [fig.15].



fig.15

Composition with Beets, (1959). Oil on canvas. 60 x 64 cm.
Fuglsang Kunstmuseum. Photo: Ole Akhøj. © Ingemann Andersen

In his presentation of the exhibition *Ingemann Andersen* organised by Foreningen ung dansk kunst (Society for Young Danish Art), the artist was able, according to Sterup-Hansen, through things:

[...] to connect with a very essential element in ourselves – even managing to talk about the human situation – through a couple of beets on a table [...]. This ability to immerse oneself into the existing – and not dream oneself away from things – but through them create an expression of humanity – humanise them to such an extent that a locality, personified by a couple of beets – and naturally by all the pictures going before them – is given a voice – or colour, one should say, tells us something about the inner life of art – something we might well forget at a time when high speed and efficiency is chasing art the way it chases the rest of society.

The above character references were later expanded in the catalogue of the solo exhibition *Ingemann Andersen. Lolland-Italien (Ingemann Andersen. Lolland-Italy)* at Storstrøms Kunstmuseum in Lolland 1992, for example. On this occasion, the director Nils Ohrt (b.1952) stressed Andersen's virtuoso printmaking technique, his being 'in tune with the nature of the material', but also the abstract and decorative features of the works. In the catalogue of the solo exhibition *Ingemann Andersen – usete tegninger og akvareller (Ingemann Andersen – Unseen Drawings and Watercolours)* at Storstrøms Kunstmuseum to mark the artist's 70th birthday in 1999, Ohrt's successor, museum director Anne Højer Petersen (b.1964) noted, for example, his talent for showing 'the richness in small things, the diversity of nature, and the existence of abstraction in all things imagined' through drawings and watercolours.

A review of the above makes the writers' consensus on Ingemann Andersen's qualities quite clear: they emphasise his strict work ethics, mastering his craft, and his choice of motif, which they believe adds gravity to the content. Andersen himself underpinned this narrative: he liked to emphasise the solid craft and material aspects of his profession, whereas he had difficulty in reconciling himself to the purely decorative aspects.⁴

As for content, the young artist himself formulated his project in an interview in the newspaper *Ny Dag*, 1959: 'I wouldn't mind being a revolutionary, but I'm no good at it. I'd go for the banal. I believe one should be careful about going beyond banality. If you've really got something to say, the end result is bound to be good.' The 'banal' in this context could be interpreted as things fundamentally and essentially shared by all human beings.

MEDIA AND MOTIFS

Although Ingemann Andersen preferred the advanced woodcuts in both black-and-white and colour, he produced compositions in oil throughout his life, particularly of people, architecture, and landscapes composed in large planes with simplistic lines using his brush and spatula. His smaller production of sculpture, primarily with architecture as a motif, was sculpted in wood, modelled in clay, and cast in gypsum, cement, and bronze [fig.16].



fig.16
*Atrani, Italy, 1973. Bronze. 28 x 29,5 x 8 cm. Fuglsang
Kunstmuseum. Donation from the artist's heirs. Photo:
Ole Akhøj. © Ingemann Andersen*

The latter sprang from a deep fascination of the town of Atrani's cubic appearance, which grew so acute that he was forced to break into three-dimensionality to be able to represent it artistically. Moreover, the works in cement were given a coat of whitewash similar to the houses in the town, thus physically combining, like the trees in his woodcuts, the real motif with the chosen artistic material.

Furthermore, Andersen worked extensively with mosaics. This started already in the early 1960s after having studied mosaics in Ravenna. Landscapes, birds, and close-ups of various plant growths were his favourite motifs while the genre's rich traditional marble and glass were dominant materials. In some cases, he also used sherds, pebbles, plastic, and other available materials to create variation and novelty in surfaces and texture. Moreover, mosaics inspired him to do work that, to quote him, was 'more decorative', such as in motifs with tree trunks, branches, foliage, and vines.

The mosaics also influenced his many woodcuts, where practically the entire picture plane was carefully worked over with fine cuts and delicate lines – in the same way that mosaic tiles at various angles create a vibrant surface [fig.17]. According to Andersen, the

two media were also related inasmuch as both shared a slow technique – they took months to produce, if not years in the case of the large-scale mosaics.



fig.17
Backlit Vine, San Cataldo, 1994. Woodcut. 370 x 370 mm.
Fuglsang Kunstmuseum. Photo: Ole Akhøj. © Ingemann Andersen

THE FAVOURITE WOODCUT

Black-and-white woodcuts are basically made in a simple relief-printing technique where the printmaker cuts away the non-image areas from the block, only leaving a raised printing surface. The parts left will then be coloured and ultimately transferred to the paper by printing. In 1979, when describing his technique, Andersen said that he preferred to work with pear-tree blocks or sheets of beechwood veneer, on which he placed a thin piece of Japan paper before transferring the colour to the paper by carefully rubbing it with a spoon to achieve a 'better print and deeper colours'. However, he also made use of printing presses.

The colour woodcut became widespread in the West from the second half of the nineteenth century when Japan became accessible to the rest of the world through trade agreements. Even then Japanese materials, techniques, and aesthetics inspired visual artists, craftspeople, designers, and architects alike. The simplistic Japanese expression was adopted by many Scandinavian artists, who were thus inspired to work with other things than traditional oil painting.⁵ For example, this Japanism was instrumental in a group of Danish artists depicting nature in new ways, paying special attention to tree trunks, branches, foliage, and flowers in their form experiments.

Also, Japonism offered methods to transfer a motif in a colour woodcut and make a precise print using several blocks successively, one for each colour. Ingemann Andersen's meticulous colour woodcuts using between two to seven colours (perhaps more) were also produced using one block for each colour. This required great accuracy, patience, and not least strict control of the process [fig.18].

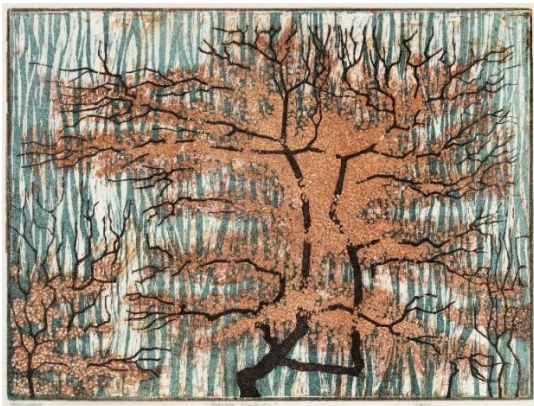


fig.18
Beech Tree, Winter Day, 1982. Woodcut. 320 x 420 mm.
Fuglsang Kunstmuseum. Photo: Ole Akhøj. © Ingemann Andersen

Andersen keenly explored the genre's focus on planes, silhouettes, structures, and patterns in variations, repetitions, and close-ups from both Denmark and Italy, so that the undulating plough furrows from Ryde on Lolland become almost indistinguishable from the characteristic tiled roofs from the Amalfi Coast – and the beets indistinguishable from the round stones in the walls surrounding San Cataldo's monastery garden [fig.19]. His careful chasing of the picture plane also results in optical illusions; to give an example, the motifs often resemble dreamlike visions with fluid transitions between one native region and another.



fig.19
Houses Near San Cataldo, 1980. Woodcut. 380 x 460 mm.
Fuglsang Kunstmuseum. Photo: Ole Akhøj. © Ingemann Andersen

Andersen himself supplied the following information for use in the annotated index *Dansk grafik – gennem 25 år* from 1985, namely the significance of the woodcut as a medium to the abstract effects in his work, which was so intimately tied up with material, technique, and process:

When I feel prompted to work with a graphic expression – woodcuts in black-and-white [...], it is probably because I consider it the medium best suited to formulate my experiences; besides, I like the material, of course [...] The motif and my experience of the material are closely connected. I see the motif through the material. In any case, I find the technical know-how required for the graphic form of expression satisfying – it comes close to craftwork, which is good – also, the fact that the motif, when successful, will survive the whole technical procedure says something about the sustainability of the experience – and that's good, too. There's a liberating aspect of graphic art, since its basic theory is essentially abstract: black-and-white does not exist in nature, and this sets me free from the very beginning.

Although, on this occasion, he addressed the black-and-white woodcut, his statement also implies works in colour because, likewise, the limited palette of colour can be perceived as abstract and liberating.

In 1992, Ingemann Andersen gave a further reason for preferring colour woodcuts to the newspaper *Politiken*: 'People lack patience nowadays, everything has got to be fast – and that's not possible when making colour woodcuts. It takes months.' With these words, he completed the circle, so to speak, by reiterating Dan Sterup-Hansen's praise from 1961 of Andersen's talent for – in contrast to present-day high speed and efficiency in art and society at large – immersing himself in the existing, thus giving expression to humanity.

X-RAY EYES AND DUAL VISIONS – FROM A PERSPECTIVE OF NATURE POETRY

When Ingemann Andersen returned to Denmark full-time in the mid-1990s, he concentrated his attention on the natural landscape around the smallholding in Ryde, which he had chiefly experienced in wintertime during his years at San Cataldo [fig.20].



fig.20

Maple Leaves, n.d. Woodcut and linocut. 440 x 385 mm. Fuglsang Kunstmuseum. Photo: Ole Akhøj. © Ingemann Andersen

On the whole, the surrounding landscape was an important part of his work and should therefore, in conclusion, be perceived in relation to an example of Danish nature poetry created during his formative years, which may help express his ‘dual visions’. Poet, writer, and critic Otto Gelsted (1888–1968) was, at one time, working at the newspaper *Lolland-Falsters Folketidende*, and he stayed at San Cataldo on several occasions, one of these being in the late 1950s. There can be no doubt that Ingemann Andersen knew Gelsted’s literary work well, and three of the poet’s collections were found on the shelves of the monastery library in Andersen’s early years.

One of these was the poetry collection *Aldrig var Dagen så lys* (*Never Was a Day So Bright*) from 1959, written during Gelsted’s stay at the monastery the previous year. It could be interpreted as congenial words to accompany the ‘portrayers of men’s’ existential pictures from the same decade as well as Andersen’s woodcuts. In particular the poem which lent its name to the collection:

Sol over hav! Og solsangen
runger og jubler
vidt over marker og huse
og kirkernes kupler.

*Sun over the sea! The song of the sun
ascends triumphantly afire
pervading pastures and houses
and every church spire.*

Solguden styrer sit spand
over menneskers mylder
tænder livet i brand

*The sun god rides his wagon
above man’s weary lot
igniting life’s beacon*

på bjergenes hylder.

on every mountain spot.

Går der et lønligt gys

Sensing a quaking fright

over klippe og sø?

over mountains and the deep?

Aldrig var dagen så lys

Never was a day so bright

og i dag skal vi dø.

on this, the day we sleep.

A tribute to nature and a *memento mori* related to the ambiguity in Ingemann Andersen's art: something that is surreal, enigmatic, quirky, or awaiting us in dark anticipation, indicating that the world is truly wondrous and unpredictable, far more so than most people would probably notice on a busy day [fig.21].



fig.21

Garden Motif, Italy (San Cataldo), 1993. Woodcut. 410 x 255 mm. Fuglsang Kunstmuseum. Donation from the artist's heirs. Photo: Ole Akhøj. © Ingemann Andersen

When Ingemann Andersen was asked to respond to a question asked by the newspaper *Ny Dag*, 1979, about what he hoped his art would achieve, he replied, 'I believe that, through art, your eyes will be responsive to everyday beauty.' At the crossroads of naturalism, construction, and abstraction, he portrayed this beauty and – albeit unspoken on his part – he thus opened up for the less glamorous sides of everyday life in 'dual visions', which he selected from his close surroundings in both his native regions with X-ray precision.

While mastering painting, sculpture, drawing, watercolour, and mosaics, it was as a printmaker, notably of woodcuts, that he expressed this most strongly. It occurred via a

fruitful exchange between the farm on Lolland and the monastery on the mountainous Amalfi Coast, where the 'woodman' and the 'beet maestro' was originally freed from sensory perceptions, instead filtering, compressing, and reassembling them anew through memory and in respect of the nature of the materials, he worked with [fig.22].



fig.22

Sugar Beet, c. 2001. Woodcut. 330 x 250 mm.
Fuglsang Kunstmuseum. Donation from the artist's
heirs. Photo: Ole Akhøj. © Ingemann Andersen

*The text is a revised and shortened version of this author's text with the same title in the exhibition catalogue, Tine Nielsen Fabienke (ed.): *Dobbeltsyner. Ingemann Andersen i Danmark og Italien*, Fuglsang Kunstmuseum, KunstCentret Silkeborg Bad, and Kastrupgårdsamlingen, 2022. English translation: SprogBiz.

¹ The Danish word 'træmanden' has a double meaning. In addition to 'woodman' it means a 'stick-in-the-mud'.

² Liza Kaaring: 'Rising from Darkness', in Pernille Feldt (ed.): *Rising from Darkness. Portrayers of Man in Danish 1950s Prints*, The Royal Collection of Prints and Drawings, National Gallery of Denmark: Copenhagen 2015.

³ Matilde Romito: *Wanderer in Traumlandschaft. Pittori stranieri ad Amalfi, Atrani e Ravello nella prima metà del '900*, Centro di Cultura e Storia Amalfitana: Amalfi 2020. Thanks to Annette Ohl, manager at San Cataldo, for drawing my attention to this book.

⁴ Thanks to Johanne Heide for information on discussions with Ingemann Andersen about the relationship between art and decoration.

⁵ See, for example, Gabriel P. Weisberg (ed.): *Japanomania in the Nordic Countries 1875–1918*, Mercatorfonds: Brussels 2016.