

**TOUCHSTONE
GALLERY**

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**JØRGEN BIRMAN exhibits new
paintings
at THE ANNEX, Touchstone Gallery**



I grew up in a rural area on an island. Working as a painter transports me back to the ocean and the fields of my childhood. These stark landscapes possess raw beauty: green fields with patches of yellow rape flowers, bright in the gray mist from the ocean. The ocean itself gray and green, but on some days it glowed cobalt blue – days of wild happiness.

Instead of trying to depict landscapes that exist, I paint landscapes of my own: they only exist as paintings. Nature filtered through a consciousness and transformed into a symbol of paint and canvas. To me, a good painting lives a life of its own, simple and naked. Not a decoration to be adored, but a powerful magic symbol to be used in our everyday lives. A painting should not *copy*; it should *be*. I like colors to be strong and lines to have rhythm. Perspective is irrelevant to me. Paintings are two-dimensional. I prefer translucency to perspective.



I am a self-taught painter and jazz musician. I began with oil paint around 1975. During the late 1970's I traveled the Danish countryside in a van that functioned as both home and workshop, setting up my easel at the side of the road or in the middle of a



field, painting from nature. I don't think any paintings from that time have survived. Although most of them turned out as confused attempts I mention them here because they are part of the chronology. More important, they taught me that the most miserable materials, the cheapest paints, inherently have strong poetic qualities – in other words that it is vital to respect and utilize the nature of your materials. To me the act of painting is like making music. Fields of color and lines are like chords and rhythm. Duke Ellington's title "**It Don't Mean A Thing if it Ain't Got That Swing**" holds true not only to music but to painting as well.

In 1985, I moved to the United States. Since then, I have worked alone. I was never a member of any specific stylistic group or ideological direction within the art world. I consider my position as an outsider beneficial because it has allowed me to concentrate on my work and to develop along a path determined by my visions rather than current trends. (JB December, 2003)