

Tove Jansson's 100th anniversary

The 100th anniversary of the famous Finnish Swedish-speaking artist, illustrator, political caricaturist and author Tove Jansson is to be celebrated in 2014. She gained international fame for her Moomin characters and stories

The Moomins are much loved by children all over the world and are an integral part of Finnish children's literature. The imaginative, exciting and poetic stories of the small hippopotamus-like characters, who are always funny and friendly, open minded and liberal towards other people and curious about the unknown, have been translated into more than 30 languages. Their creator, Tove Jansson, would have celebrated her 100th birthday in 2014.

Tove Marika Jansson was born on 9 August 1914 in Helsinki. She grew up in an ambitious family of artists. Her father was a sculptor, her mother a graphic designer and illustrator. Her younger brothers respectively worked as photographer, author and comic artist. During her childhood she spent many summers on a tiny island in the Gulf of Finland together with her family. This idyllic place inspired the artist for the tranquil Moomin valley, where her famous Moomin characters live.

Before beginning her literary work, Tove Jansson studied Art in Stockholm, Helsinki and Paris. Already in the 1930s she hid Moomin characters, her future trademark, in her works, e.g. in a caricature showing the former German dictator Adolf Hitler. She published her first Moomin novel *The Moomins and the Great Flood* in 1945. Her early works show a childish naive alternative world as a contrast to the gloomy reality of war and the post-war world. Outside dangers such as floods or comets threatens the idyll of the Moomin valley, and initially force the Moomin family to escape from their home. Following many adventures the Moomins return to their valley. Later stories tell the inner perspectives of the main characters of the lovable family, their quirks, self-doubts, desires, strengths and weaknesses.

The author and painter transferred events from her own life into imaginative images and stories. In addition to the novels she created comics, TV and film productions as well as theatre plays.

Tove Jansson not only wrote children's literature, she also created short-stories and narratives for adults. Here she also mainly produced autobiographical works.

Tove Jansson had many careers. Although the Moomins played a major role in her life, at heart Tove was a multifaceted artist. Most of Jansson's paintings are landscapes, interiors and still-lives in which she often incorporated her favourite sea and island subjects. She was also well-known for her satirical anti-war illustrations for the magazine *Garm*. Tove Jansson was also a master of monumental paintings and large compositions. She created murals for many public places throughout Finland. As in her Moomin stories, her artistic work reflected real events and people in her own life and also her love of freedom and independence.

Tove Jansson died in 2001, aged 86 years. For her literary works she was presented with many awards, e.g. the International Youth Book Award, the Nils Holgersson Prize, the Swedish Academy Award and twice, The Finland Art Prize. Her life works not only encompass literature but also visual arts.

To mark the 100th anniversary of the birth of Tove Jansson her biography *Tove Jansson – Tee työtä ja rakasta* written by Dr Tuula Karjalainen will be published in ten countries in the world, e.g. in Germany (Urachhaus), Sweden (Norstedts) and also in China.

Further information about the artist Tove Jansson is available at www.tove100.com

Further information:

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