

# Book Review

# Jarle

# Strømmodden:

# Vigeland & the

# Park

JUCR Staff

*A Park for All*

Jarle Strømmodden: Vigeland & the Park

On April 11, 2019 the art world celebrated the 150th birthday of one of Europe's greatest sculptors of our time, the Norwegian Gustav Vigeland. Each year 1.5 million visitors from far and wide flock to the Vigeland Park in central Oslo, the most popular tourist attraction of our capital, seeking the unique experience of walking through the fascinating sculptural landscape that was to become Vigeland's gift to the city of Oslo, Norway and the world.

For this jubilee, Jarle Strømholm, Director of the Vigeland Museum and responsible for the administration and communication of the Vigeland legacy has taken upon himself to share his knowledge about the artist and his work in a new book: Vigeland & the Park.

It is first and foremost the work of an art historian telling the story of the development of the park itself and the creation of all its elements. Giving extraordinary

life to the text, however, one will between the covers find the most impressive collection of documentary art photography imaginable, interpreting in their own way the spirit and symbolic meaning of each and every sculpture and the complex as a whole.



Figure 1. The sculptor, Gustav Vigeland and his work.

The text in itself mainly aims at giving historical and descriptive introductions to each unit beginning with the magnificent entrance of the 7 wrought iron gates with the universally symbolic dragon and fish motives and with an alleyway leading to the bridge with its 59 bronze and 4 granite sculptures aiming at depicting human play in all its aspects. Some of the bridge sculptures have become visitors favorites like the Angry Boy and the powerful male figure cradling a baby in his arms.

Main chapters are devoted to the origin of the central fountain with enveloping human reliefs depicting life's journey between birth and death, symbolically envisioned by a surrounding and inviting labyrinth and leading on to the Monolith hill with surrounding sculptures of peoples of all ages. The author tells the story of the carving and transport of what was to crown the complex as the final reference point, a Monolith of raging 13 meters high and weighing 260 tons.

Some readers might miss a guide to the symbolic and spiritual interpretation and impact of Vigeland's legacy but leaves it open: "How one experiences the Park and its sculptures depends first and foremost on one's own references and preferences."

P.S. For the researcher there is an appendix containing a catalogue of works in the park from the Gustav Vigeland Archives.

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