

By Lotte Korshøj

Biography

Else Alfelt 1910-1974



Else Alfelt at the Høst exhibition, 1948. Photo: © Børge Venge



1910-25

Else Kirsten Tove Alfelt was born on September 16th 1910 in Copenhagen as the daughter of a senior bank clerk Carl Valdemar Alfelt and housewife Edith Thomsen. Her parents were divorced when Else was very young. When her father remarried, his new wife demanded that Else and her younger sister were sent away from home. As a result Else spent the years from 7 to 15 in an orphanage. When she was 12, an aunt presented her with a paint box and at an early age she made her first tentative efforts as an artist, portraying staff and children at the orphanage. Part of her inspiration came from the frequent visits made by the orphanage to the Church of Immanuel, where she had ample opportunity to study Niels Skovgaard's altarpiece.



1925-27

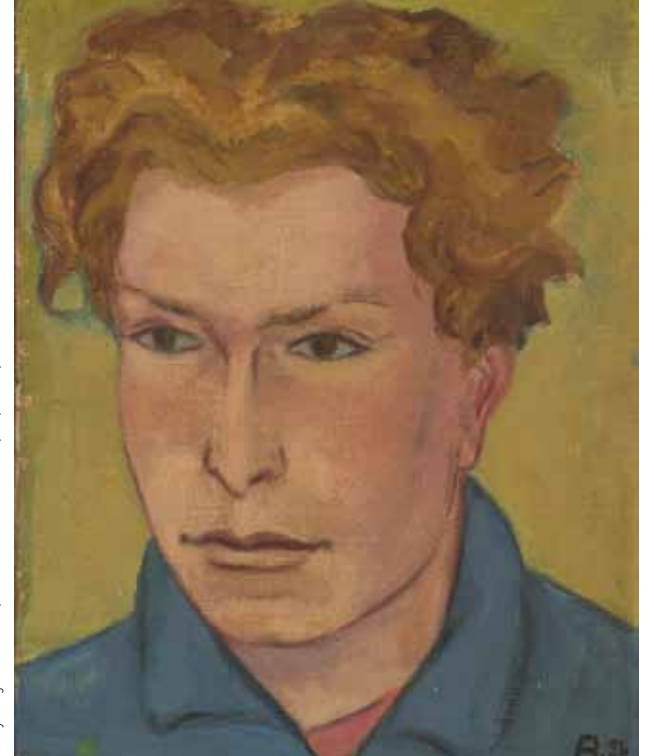
On leaving the orphanage Else knew that she wanted to work and live as an artist, and she therefore entered the Technical School in Copenhagen. The two-year training functioned as a preparation course for the Art Academy, but when she subsequently applied to the Academy to study with Aksel Jørgensen she was turned down. The rejection was made on the grounds that she already possessed the necessary painting skills. That was not, as a matter of fact, her reason for applying; her intention had been to qualify for a series of grants.¹ During this period she had no stable income but made a little money modelling at the academy, where she came into contact with the art scene. At no point in her life did Else receive formal artistic training, but one of the ways in which she proved her technical skills was by copying the paintings in the National Art Museum.² As a self-taught artist she shared a starting point with many of the artists that she would mix with later. Later, in fact, when she was moving towards the abstract idiom, she made no bones of her opinion that the academy schooling and conventionality could actually act as a brake on artistic creativity; an attitude that she shared with many of her later colleagues.

¹ Carl-Henning Pedersen about Else in Anne Wolden-Ræthinge: *Det står skrevet i stjernerne – Carl-Henning Pedersens liv* (It Is Written in the Stars – Life of Carl-Henning Pedersen), Gyldendal 1989, p. 58.

² Poul Gammelbo: "Else Alfelt" I: *Vor tids Kunst* (Modern Art in Our Time 66), Copenhagen 1968, p. 5.

1927-29

She did her first oil paintings in 1927, and in 1929, two years later, she submitted paintings to the Artists' Autumn Exhibition (KE) for the first time, but was turned down; this would repeat itself several times in the following years, until she was finally accepted in 1936.



1933-34

Not only was her interest in painting awakened at an early age, Else also, very early on, felt a strong longing to go abroad. She dreamed of travelling the world to experience other cultures. In 1933 she was admitted as a student to the International Folk High School in Elsinore. She intended to study foreign languages so that she might later carry out her wish to travel. The period spent at the Folk High School would turn out to be very important to Else, not least because she met her future husband there. He was the young Communist Carl-Henning Pedersen (1913-2007), who was her model for the portrait *The Young Communist*, painted at the High School 1933-1934. Only a year after meeting each another Else and Carl-Henning got married, and in 1934 their daughter Vibeke Alfelt (1934-1999) was born. Inspired by her parents she became an artist in her turn, noted for her characteristic horse motifs. At an early age Vibeke also took part in the decoration of the legendary Cobra ceiling in Bregnerød. During their first period together Else and Carl-Henning moved from one rented studio to another, until they succeeded in finding a permanent residence in 1936 in a one-and-a-half-room flat in Ny Carlsbergvej in Copenhagen.



1935

1936

The young artist couple soon became friendly with other young experimental artists, and in the winter of 1935-36 they made the acquaintance of the abstract painter Egill Jacobsen, whom they met at an anti-war demonstration at Nørrevold in Copenhagen. Alfelt knew Egill Jacobsen's girlfriend, the painter Inge Bendixen, and Egill Jacobsen soon became a good friend and colleague. At about the same time they also got to know others in the group of young artists: Ejler Bille, Henry Heerup, Asger Jorn, Richard Mortensen, Erik Thommesen and Sonja Ferlov. Together they made up a close circle that met to explore art and discuss each other's paintings.

Having submitted several paintings to the Artists' Autumn Exhibition she finally got in in 1936 when, together with Carl-Henning Pedersen, she showed her first paintings, two naturalistic portraits. One of them portrayed her stepbrother with an oil lamp in the lighthouse of Lodbjerg. The painting no longer exists. Like many of her early naturalistic works it has been painted over and the canvas reused for a later picture. Alfelt, especially during periods of financial stress, reused her earlier canvasses, which represented an artistic idiom that she later dissociated herself from. Some of these early paintings she gave to Carl-Henning Pedersen whom she inspired to paint. Carl-Henning painted over some of the pictures; others were used by Else for her own paintings and she often painted both on the front and back in order to exploit the material in the best possible way. Else exhibited at the Autumn Exhibition until 1941.



Rhapsody in Blue, 1938. Oil on canvas, 62 x 74,5 cm

1937

Else exhibited again in 1937 at the Artists' Autumn Exhibition, but this time with abstract paintings that were shown here publicly for the first time. Titles like *Surrealistisk komposition: Drømmebilleder* (Surrealist Composition: Dream Pictures) and *Abstraktion: mand og kvinde* (Abstraction: Man and Woman) reveal her interest in the abstract idiom and the fundamental ideas of Surrealism. In that same year Else found just the inspiration that she needed for abstraction when she saw the international exhibition of abstract art at Den Frie Centre of Contemporary Art. Towards the end of the 1930s Else took part in the politically engaged "Red Theatre", which, among other plays, put on Bertolt Brecht's *Senora Carrar's Rifles*. Else acts as the scenographer on the set and in this capacity she gets to know Bertolt Brecht whom she went to visit in 1937 in his exile near Svendborg together with Carl-Henning Pedersen.



Further Development of the Painting Man and Two Women, 1938. Oil on canvas, 61 x 73 cm. Private collection. Photo: © Bruun Rasmussen Kunstauktioner

1938

In 1938 Else carried out some restoration work at the National Museum and she also made her first contacts in the artists' association Skandinaverne. In the same year she exhibited at the Artists' Autumn Exhibition in Den Frie Centre of Contemporary Art in Copenhagen. She entered the paintings *Videre Udvikling af Billedet Mand og to Kvinder* (Further Development of the Painting Man and Two Women), *Komposition i grønt* (Composition in Green) and *Oven over svævende* (Floating Above).



She became a member of Skandinaverne and exhibited together with the group at Charlottenborg. Journey to Oslo.

Skandinaverne at Charlottenborg, 1939
From the Left: Sigurjón Ólafsson, Carl-Henning Pedersen, Erling Friis, Svavar Guðnason, Erling Clante, Arne Johansen, Else Alfelt, Erik Thommesen and Asger Jorn

Else and Carl-Henning with their daughter Kari-Nina, aged 3, in the flat at Ny Carlsbergvej, 1943



1940

Exhibited with Skandinaverne in Liljevalchs Konsthall in Stockholm. The couple's second daughter Kari-Nina was born in 1940.

1941

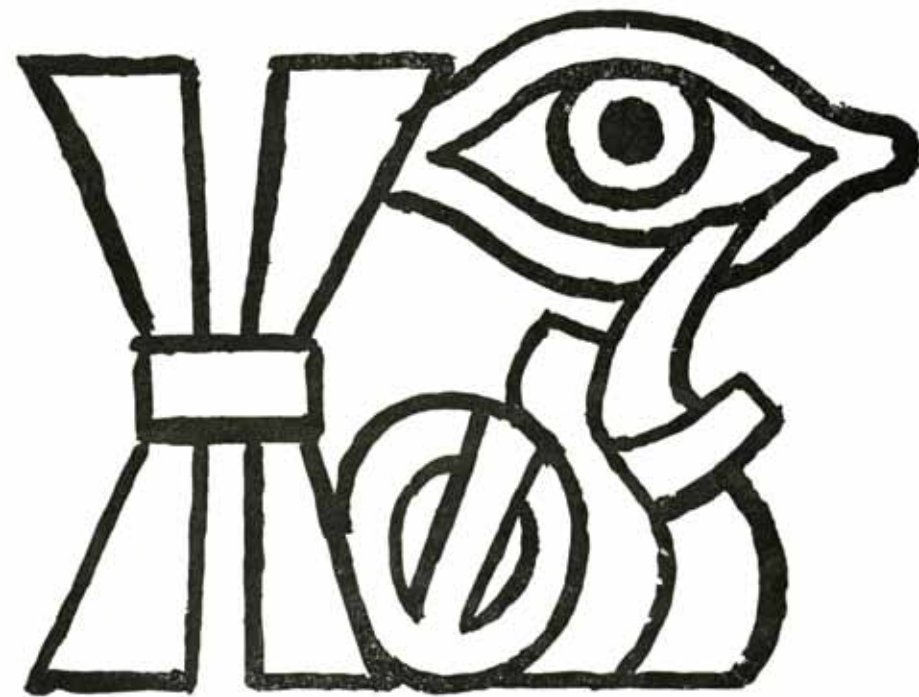
Else Alfelt held her first solo exhibition in Thorkild Hansen's Art Gallery in Copenhagen and she was re-presented that same year at the exhibition *13 kunstnere i et telt* (13 Artists in a Tent) by Bellevue, where the art collector Elise Johansen bought one of her pictures.

1942

In 1942 Else Alfelt was accepted as a member of the Høst group. She entered the group together with Carl-Henning Pedersen, Asger Jorn and Svavar Guðnason and together they belonged to a minority of abstract painters. The contrast between "the naturalists" and "the abstract" led to the disbanding of the group – Else, as the only member, never resigned! In 1942 she also worked, together with Carl-Henning Pedersen, in Tejn on the island of Bornholm, where a German art collector had placed the "Klömper House" at their disposal.

1943

Stayed in Femmøller at Mols. Used for the first time the term mountains about her compositions. Participated in the exhibition Nordisk Kunst (Nordic Art) at the Mässhall in Gothenburg.



During that year Egill Jacobsen's introduction to Else Alfelt's work was published in the magazine *Helhesten*. The magazine had been started in 1940 with Asger Jorn, Ejler Bille, P.V. Glob and Carl-Henning Pedersen as the pioneers. Else was affiliated with the group connected with *Helhesten* right from the outset, and she stated in an interview to Denmark's Radio, entitled *Det abstraktes genkomst* (The Return of the Abstract), that an interest in all peoples and their cultures was integral to the cohesion of the group. This interest also brought about the creation of strong links to other peoples: "These close human relations across the borders [...] I think they meant a lot to us, and we could assimilate the culture, the art and the sensations of all these peoples by reading books and by looking and talking about it".³

³ Else Alfelt in an interview with Ejnar Johansen, The Danish Broadcasting Corporation, date unknown. Carl-Henning Pedersen & Else Alfelt's Museum archives.



1944

Else took part in the Høst group's collective decoration of a kindergarten in December 1944 in Hjortøgade in Copenhagen. The decoration was the result of a competition held earlier that year for a new youth centre. Each member of the Høst group had submitted an individual decoration project, plus one collective entry. Richard Mortensen won the competition. However, the collective project from the Høst group was, through the agency of Asger Jorn, realised in Hjortøgade, where Else's mountain formations came to dominate the walls in one of the rooms.



1945-48

In 1945 Else held her second solo exhibition at Tokanten's Art Gallery at the same time as Erik Thommesen. Tokanten offered a meeting place for the abstract artists, and this was where she met a number of Swedish artists who would be important for her trip to Swedish Lapland, which she made later that year. This was to be the first of many trips to Swedish and Norwegian Lapland which she made in the period 1945-48 and which was to give rise to a new colouristic departure in her work.

In 1947 she participated in a series of exhibitions; she exhibited for instance with Carl-Henning Pedersen at Gummeson's Art Gallery in Oslo, with Pär Lindblad at Lorensberg's Art Gallery in Gothenburg, and she also took part in the exhibition *Danish Abstract Art* at the Göteborgs Konsthall together with, among others, Ejler Bille, Else Fischer-Hansen, Richard Mortensen, Svavar Guðnason, Henry Heerup and Carl-Henning Pedersen.



1948

Else spent the summer of 1948 in Iceland where she, with the Høst exhibition, showed her work in Reykjavik. She met the author Halldór Laxness here. Else held a retrospective at the exhibition and was also in charge of the catalogue cover. Her experience of the Icelandic scenery left permanent marks in her art, and for a time she moved away from the strong-coloured oil paintings and painted a series of watercolours, done with a light brush. The watercolour *The Blue Flower of the Lava*, 1948 is a case in point.

In 1948, together with Ejler Bille and Robert Dahlmann Olsen, among others, Asger Jorn wrote a manifesto about a future plan of collaboration with fellow artists in Europe. Else Alfelt signed the agreement together with Carl-Henning Pedersen, Egill Jacobsen, Ejler Bille, Asger Jorn, Dahlmann Olsen and Erik Thommesen. Later that year the international artistic association Cobra was founded, Cobra being the initials of Copenhagen, BRussels and Amsterdam. The group existed for a brief period from 1948 to 1951, but left a legacy that lasted for many years, in particular Else Alfelt's position in the group was and is still a matter of continued debate.

In 1948 Else also exhibited in the Art Association in Oslo and was represented at the exhibition *Nordiska Konstnärinnor* (Nordic Women Artists) in Liljevalchs Konsthall in Stockholm.



Else and Carl-Hemming visiting Constant, 1949
The Picture shows Else Alfelt together with Tony and Karel Appel



Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, 1949



1949

The Høst group, of which Else had been an integral part for several years, was dissolved in 1949, and she began an exhibition collaboration with the new-founded Cobra group that held their first show *International Experimental Art* that year at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam. During this period she was vice-chairman of the jury at the Artists' Autumn Exhibition and a board member of the Association of Visual Artists.

1950

In 1950 Else travelled to Norway and Greece, and she also exhibited at the Salon des Surindépendants, Paris. The French poet Edouard Jaguer's monograph on Else Alfelt was published in the Cobra Library series. And that same year she received, as the first abstract artist in Denmark, the New Carlsberg Foundation's travel grant, the Roman grant that paid for half a year's study in Italy.



Else with daughters Kar-Nina, 10 and Vibeke, 16

Alberobello

1952

Jeg sidder nu i det sydøstlige Hjørne af Italien, i Toget 4³² Morgen - Det er kulsort Nat og koldt, men jeg er hedat Forventning. Jeg føler at jeg i Dag vil opleve noget, der i Tid kan måle sig med det Snekeerland jeg lige har forladt og som efterlod en Brand i min Sjæl. I Francavilla, Byen hvor Jernbanen fra Tarento støder til, skifter jeg, og nu går det videre i nordlig Retning. Magert og ¹⁰²net dukker Landet op, meget grønt her ikke. Der er langt mellem Ejendomme og Havene ~~er~~ er det Marker er heget af Stændiger, der sine Steder vokser vil men. Mellens sådanne mere små Vejene sig som Labyrinter i det flade Land.

Som en kæmpe, blankback Kugle, hævner Solen sig fra den sorte Jord, med dens lugtfulde Pragt er vi i en ny Verden, i et Landskab bebygget som med byzantinske Kirker, hvile ligger de tæt som Gårdene i Danmark. Mens Farten går frem, er det som gled vi Aristokrater tilbage - eller fulgte vi den røde Kugle ned i Rummet -

Tagens Kuper danner magiske Bjerglandskaber. Ornamenternes bløde blidhed mod de grove grå Stenbæge, Universets Ornamente, Sol, Måne og Stjerner, grønde

som simple Blomster, talende i Bogstavtegn fælde at Mystik. Enkelte af Gårdene har hele Facaden samlet i en nudset rektangulær Flade, der heles dækket af et geometrisk, asymmetrisk Mønstre, malet i to Farver gråt og blå og okker, eller okker og rødt, deslige at se på som Tegningen af Klee. Den individuelle Brug af Virkemidlerne, Kuperens Antal efter Familiens Behov, Ornamenternes Forskellighed, den dekorative Udnyttelse af Kalkmønstre - snart er hele Bygningen kalket, snart kun Underdelen, Overdelen, Midterpartiet el. Kuperen o.s.v. - giver tilsammen Billedet af en frodig, levende skabende Folkekultur, hvor Ornamentet, Skulpturen, Arkitekturen har indgået en så ~~stærk~~ i sin Forbindelse, at den omskaber Landskabet med sin Ånd og gfr det vidt.

Her fornemmes Omridset af Europas ældste Historie - Ornamentene er primitive, magiske og kristne - Kulturen kaldes "Trulli". Hovedmuseet for den findes i Bari og Hovedværket om den er skrevet af Giuseppe Notarnicola i Trulli di Alberobello.

Eise Alfelt

Alberobello 1952

I am right now in the southeast corner of Italy, sitting on a train at 4.32 in the morning - the night is pitch-black night and cold, but I am burning with anticipation. I feel that I'm going to experience something today, something that in terms of time can compare with the Greece that I just left and which lit a fire in my soul. In Francavilla, the town where the railway from Tarento meets this line, I'll change trains and my journey will continue northwards. The land comes into view, barren and stony, nothing much grows here. The houses are far apart. The gardens, or are they fields, are enclosed by stone dykes, rising in some places to the height of a wall. Between the walls roads meander like labyrinths across the flat countryside.

The sun rises from the black ground like a giant ball of madder lake, its flaming golden splendour takes us to a new world, a landscape dotted with structures looking like Byzantine churches, white and close together like the farms in Denmark. As the train accelerates, it is as if we are thousands of years back in time - or following the red sphere out into space.

The cone-shaped roofs form magical mountain landscapes. The soft whiteness of the ornaments against the rough grey stone roofs, the ornaments of the universe, sun, moon and stars, growing like simple flowers, speaking in a language of alphabetic signs full of mystery. On some of the farms the entire facade appears as a unified rectangular rendered facade, completely covered by a geometric, asymmetrical pattern, painted in two colours grey or blue and ochre, or ochre and red, wonderful to look at like drawings by Klee. The individual use of effects, a number of cones to match the needs of the family, the diversity of the ornaments, the decorative use of whitewashing - now the whole building is whitewashed, now only the lower section, the upper section, the middle section or the cone etc. - come together to give an impression of an exuberant, vibrant, creative folk culture, in which ornaments, sculpture, architecture share such an intimate connection that it transforms the landscape with its spirit, making it timeless.

Here one senses the outline of Europe's earliest history, the ornaments are primitive, magical and Christian - the culture is called "Trulli". The main museum for Trulli culture is in Bari and the main work on it is written by Giuseppe Notarnicola y Trulli di Alberobello.

Eise Alfelt

CARNEGIE INSTITUTE
DEPARTMENT OF FINE ARTS
PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA

GORDON BAILEY WASHBURN
DIRECTOR

January 5, 1953

Miss Else Alfelt
Ny Carlsbergvej 86
Copenhagen, Denmark

Dear Miss Alfelt:

The International has ended in Pittsburgh, and before the paintings leave I want to be sure to let you know that we have appreciated having your "Mountain Landscape" in our galleries. You will be relieved to know that your picture will arrive back in Copenhagen earlier than we had anticipated since it will not be going to San Francisco for the showing during February. After Mr. Howe, the Director of the California Palace of the Legion of Honor, had seen the size of the exhibition he found that much to his regret it would not be possible for him to include as many paintings as we exhibited here. Nearly sixty have been released, including "Mountain Landscape."

I hope the catalogue, Carnegie Magazine and other items we sent to you arrived safely. I am glad to say that the International was a great success in Pittsburgh, both as to attendance and enthusiasm. We are grateful to you and to the others who contributed toward that success.

Sincerely yours,

Gordon Washburn
Director

GBW D

* *



Else Alfelt visiting Egill Jacobsen. Photo: © Marius Andersen

1951-52

A journey to Greece and then Italy, where she stopped over in Athens, Alberobello and Rome. Then a short trip to Lapland. The solo exhibition *Bjergenes Verden* (The World of the Mountains) was on view at Gallery Tokanten, Copenhagen. In 1952 Else participated in the Cobra exhibition at the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh, USA. The solo exhibition *Rummet og Bjærgene* (Space and the Mountains) was held at Den Frie Centre of Contemporary Art, Copenhagen.

1953

In 1953 the New Carlsberg Foundation commissioned a mosaic for Rungsted Comprehensive School, later named *The Rainbow*. Else did some preparatory studies for the mosaic in Grønhøj at the Jammer Bay and she also travelled to the Dolomites, Venice, Ravenna, plus Spain and Greece to seek inspiration. She exhibited at the Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, USA.



1954

1955

Stayed in Ole Haslund's artist residency *Ræveskiftet* in North Zealand. The solo exhibition *Bjærgenes Skønhed* (The Beauty of the Mountains), presenting Else Alfelt's first mosaics, was held at Den Frie Centre of Contemporary Art, Copenhagen. She was furthermore represented at the exhibition arranged by Gallery Birch at Charlottenborg.

Exhibited at the Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, USA.



1956

Travelled to Greece, Turkey, Italy and Switzerland. Mountain impressions from Mont Blanc, the Jungfrau, Matterhorn and Monte Rosa were on view at the solo exhibition *Drømme og Bjerge* (Dreams and Mountains) at Den Frie Centre of Contemporary Art, Copenhagen. That year she also exhibited at the *Aarhus-udstillingen* (Aarhus Exhibition) together with painters like Egill Jacobsen, Carl-Henning Pedersen, Niels Østergård and Helge Holmskov.

Else Alfelt and Carl-Henning Pedersen traveling, 1956



Århus-udstillingens første dag havde et pænt salg
Danskene 19-10-56.
en engelsk rekonstruktion af Helligkorskirken. For det meste er det den bedste skulpturelle værk for os herhjemme, som et par af dem er dog ganske bekendte: Ivar Chudowick, Henry Moore, Graham Sutherland.
Udstillingen giver et meget indtryksfuldt billede af den engelske kunst i dag på en historisk og kunstnerisk og ikke de største engelske og den er især vigtig for os herhjemme, fordi den er en smule som, at rykningen har haft indflydelse på dansk kunst og kunst i os har været grund til at betragte os som gode repræsentanter.
Øverblikksudstilling over engelsk kunst
Som tidligere omtalt er der forbindelse med Aarhus-udstillingen

1957

After almost four years' work the mosaic *The Rainbow* was revealed in 1957 at Rungsted Comprehensive School. She had only just finished work on the large mosaic when she began planning a new big decoration, the mosaic for the Langelinie Pavilion commissioned by the Danish Arts Foundation and the City of Copenhagen's Art Foundation. She went on a journey to Rome in 1957 hoping among other things to find inspiration for this new mosaic.



1958

In 1958 Else Alfelt and Carl-Henning Pedersen bought a house in Bovbjerg on the North Sea, where they set up a studio. A stay in the Dolomites. A journey to Turkey and Greece. Then again an exhibition at the Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, and at Den Frie entitled *Land og evighed* (Land and Eternity).



1959

The New Carlsberg Foundation asked for mosaic design for the teacher training college Th. Lang in Silkeborg. Else Alfelt took part in the exhibition *8 danskar* (8 Danes) at the Göteborg Museum of Art.



1960

Else Alfelt's mosaic at the Langelinie Pavilion was inaugurated. A retrospective *Et digt om fuldmånen* (A poem on the Full Moon) in Den Frie Centre of Contemporary Art, Copenhagen. A series of oil paintings entitled *Full Moon* I-IV painted in 1958 made part of the exhibition.

1961

Else Alfelt received Tage Brandt's travel grant which she later used to travel to Japan. Journeys to Greece and Italy. An exhibition at the Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh. Cobra's ten-year anniversary was celebrated in Galerie K in Copenhagen.

**1962**

Trips to Spain and France. She visited Paris and Rouen. Solo exhibition at Den Frie entitled *Fantasiens Himle og Bjerge* (Skies and Mountains of the Imagination) where she displayed watercolours inspired by Chinese calligraphy.

1963

Together with Carl-Henning Pedersen Else went to Tunis, her first trip outside Europe. Here she worked on the project for the mosaic *Globes in Golden Space* for Th. Lang's College. Apart from that the year included journeys to Rome and Venice, and the participation in the touring exhibition *Danish Abstract Art* in the USA.

1964

She exhibited at the Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh. Went to Morocco with Carl-Henning for Christmas. Showed oil paintings and watercolours from 1962, 63 and 64 at Den Frie.

Participated in the Students' Union's Jubilee Exhibition together with painters like Henry Heerup, Egill Jacobsen, Asger Jorn, Sonja Ferlov Mancoba and Carl-Henning Pedersen.

1965

The mosaic *Globes in Golden Space* was inaugurated at Th. Lang's College in Silkeborg in 1965. Trips to Italy and Greece.



A stay in Belgium in connection with the Cobra exhibition at the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam. In Denmark there was a Cobra exhibition at Louisiana, whereas Else that year held the exhibition *Universets Blomst* (The Flower of the Universe) at Den Frie. She exhibited with Carl-Henning Pedersen at the Landskrona Art Association. Trip to Egypt.



1967

In the spring a journey to Japan on the Tage Brandt travel grant, which she received in 1961. She was accompanied by her daughter Kari-Nina who became interested in the East and later took up Oriental studies at the university. Else's original intention had been to go to China but she was refused a visa, so the fact that the choice fell on Japan was pure chance. The encounter, however, turned out to be a revelation for her, and the impressions from the temple gardens in Kyoto, the Heison Mountain, the full moon over Fuji and Nara with the thousand stone lamps took root and flourished in her art together with the strong calligraphic element.

Together with Carl-Henning Pedersen she received The Tuborg Foundation's Artists' Grant from HM Queen Ingrid's Roman Foundation. This paid for a four-month stay in Rome where they both studied the early Christian mosaics as an inspiration for their own future mosaic works.

1968

Journeys to Switzerland, Finland, the USA and Rome. Solo exhibition at the Art Association Gl. Strand. She showed her Japanese inspired pictures at the exhibition *Stenlygternes land* (The Country of the Stone Lamps) at Den Frie where she, referring to Japanese culture, laid out a Zen garden in the exhibition hall. That year the art historian and art critic Poul Gammelbo's book on Else Alfelt was published in the Gyldendal series *Vor Tids Kunst* (Contemporary Art).

1969

Lapland revisited.



1970

Stay at Lüneburger Heide. A retrospective *Solens Spejl* (The Mirror of the Sun), Den Frie Centre of Contemporary Art, Copenhagen. Represented at the international summer exhibition *Cobra i Court* (Cobra in Court), held at the Court Gallery in Copenhagen.





1971-72

Both Else and Carl-Henning were put up for membership of the artists' association Den Frie, but were turned down because of infighting. The incident raised the question "How free is Den Frie?", which became the title of a feature article on the subject in December 1971.⁴ The blackballing of Else and Carl-Henning resulted in the withdrawal from Den Frie of their colleagues Mogens Andersen, Egill Jacobsen and Robert Jacobsen, and together they founded the association the Free Artists. In 1972 the Free Artists exhibited at Charlottenborg in Copenhagen. In the text accompanying the exhibition Lars Rostrup Bøyesen described the Free Artists as "an extremely felicitous new creation whose liberal framework provided exceptional scope for the single artist as well as for the group as a whole [...] We wish to congratulate you on the fact that you are not yet too old to leave comfort behind and go and fight on the barricades".⁵

Else and Carl-Henning Pedersen held an exhibition entitled *Det evige hav og eventyrets hav* (The Sea of Eternity and the Sea of Fairytale) at Marienlyst Castle in the rooms of the Elsinore City Museum.

⁴ Carl Henning Pedersen's scrapbook *Anmeldelser + breve 1968-1980* (Reviews + Letters 1968-1980), Carl-Henning Pedersen & Else Alfelt's Museum archives.

⁵ Lars Rostrup Bøyesen in the text for the exhibition *De Frie Kunstnere* (The Free Artists), Charlottenborg 1972. Carl-Henning Pedersen's scrapbook *Reviews + Letters 1968-1980*, Carl-Henning Pedersen & Else Alfelt's Museum archives.



1973

The Academy awarded Else the Thorvaldsen Medal. She exhibited with Carl-Henning Pedersen at Galerie de France, Paris, where she showed a series of works painted in 1971 while staying in New York and Dubrovnik in Yugoslavia. Was represented at the exhibition *Danish Art 1945-1973* at the Grand Palais, Paris. Other participants were Asger Jorn, Svend Wiig Hansen, Wilhelm Freddie, Robert Jacobsen and Carl-Henning Pedersen.



1974

She visited Bali in the company of Carl-Henning Pedersen, Ejler Bille and Agnete Terkelsen. On the return journey they visited Japan and this was to be her last meeting with the East. Following several years' illness, when she apparently suffered a series of minor brain haemorrhages, Else Alfelt fell over in the street and died on the 9th of August 1974 at the age of 63. After her death a long planned exhibition was staged at Galerie Birch in Copenhagen. The title was *Frie Kunstnere* (Free Artists) and Else Alfelt was represented. Her artist colleagues from the association De Frie Kunstnere (The Free Artists) also participated and the exhibition catalogue included a farewell poem from Carl-Henning Pedersen to his dead wife.

