

R E V I E W S

about to give birth to sextuplets—a hormone-pumped and cell-divided pram with as many sleeping places; the logical result of objects also being cloned in pace with the irrational evolution of Man.

The state of objects seems critical in this 'limbo' of values. The objects flip between high and low, like dysfunctional circuit boxes, each at its own pace, which creates the feeling that one is in a mental rhythm section.

Music is the wax of consumption and melts through different physical processes. A pile of LPs droops its dog-ears when a mean-spirited iron (like an overheated paperweight) has sunk through the pile. A sort of tactile prophylactic which makes one think of the acid blood in Alien—a thought whose gravity is impossible to resist.

Craig Wood's art is direct and requires a contribution—a ten pfennig donation is taped onto the growing snake of coins which meets the viewer on a socle in the gallery entrance. The real increase in value which the exhibition successively accumulates is symptomatic for the expanding volume of thought which these objects contain. In the tradition of *objet trouvé* there seems to be room for a completely new sphere of hybrids of meaning. Honest intentions with fingers crossed behind the back seem to be the origin of this 'freak show of objects.'

Mats Bigert

STOCKHOLM

Annelie Wallin
Andréhn-Schiptienko

considerably easier to relate to more mainstream cultures.

Nevertheless Finnish artist Eskö Männiko's meteoric career as the "authentic" artist from the Arctic with "authentic" photographs from life north of the polar circle, demonstrates that the desire for a unique and powerful cultural identity is stronger than we often imagine. In this context, Annelie Wallin goes her own way and neither refers to Männiko's rural authenticity nor Swedish artist Peter Johansson's rustic kitsch. The installation *Svenska Hjärtan* is to my mind a considerably more subtle attempt to visualise a feeling and an experience of the Nordic cultural heritage. I see no explicit irony or artistic appropriation aimed at creating a distance between "here" and "over there," between the present and the past. It is rather a genuine attempt to visualise an experience and a situation which is humorous without being ironic, narrating without appropriating. It feels rather liberating.

Eva-Lotta Holm

Thomas Carlsson
Galleri Jan Wallmark

THERE IS AN OLD JOKE THAT goes, if you cut a British painter instead of drawing blood, you draw a landscape. Something similar might be said of Swedish artists except the scenery would be less deciduous, more snow clad and lit by a northern light. But as much as landscape painting defines a major idiom of the art history of both countries it has over the last half century become something of a straw target for art criticism. The tenor of this critique runs all the way from accusations that landscape painting is

one into the other but gives us ground to see both. In the title painting there is a small comic pine tree abruptly cut off by the painting's edge. It is simultaneously a detail, a pointer to the frame of the imagined window and a deliberate perspectival device. It is a coniferous vanishing point that reminds us of the artifice of painting and its effectiveness, the way we might see the world and our phantasy about it. This artfulness is also clear in the way Carlsson paints these new figurative works. His technique is anything but flashy, paint is laid on meticulously more in keeping with his older more abstract work but occasionally, as in this little pine tree, there is a flurry of brush strokes. This again seems a quite deliberate ploy we are conscious of the shifts in style as an indication of style itself and as a means to an end. Carlsson is clearly a highly skilled painter and this exhibition demonstrates not only his considerable craft but also the subtlety of his thought. The success of this exhibition is not only impressive it must surely establish Carlsson as one of the most interesting landscape painters to emerge in Sweden for some time. And for those who have claimed landscape painting to be obsolescent or condemned it for its supposed autocracy, these works provide a fitting rejoinder.

William Easton

Nina Roos
Galleri Lars Bohman

Painting died in the beginning of the 60s. This was in any case the time when Donald Judd and Robert Morris evacuated the dusty and time-honoured remnants of European painting as well as the heroism of action painting. "The

"beautifully," or in order to merely affirm past successes, testifies to her integrity.

Eva-Lotta Holm

PARIS

Bill Viola

Saint-Louis de la Salpêtrière

DURING THE FESTIVAL D'Automne, the Paris audience has been able to see Bill Viola's *Trilogy—Fire, Water, Breath*. In its three alcoves, La Chapelle de Saint-Louis de la Salpêtrière—a building dating from the 18th century—housed this video work, monumental both in impact and dimensions.

The theme of *Trilogy* is the metamorphosis of the human body under the influence of three elementary forces: fire, water, and air (the later materialized by breath). The work is based on two earlier pieces, *The Messenger* and *The Crossing*, both from 1996. Each one of its visual components take up a full space, and in particular the very centre of the chapel.

The Messenger, whose theme is breath, is located in the centre and is the first thing the spectator encounters. It is as a matter of fact the central piece of the trilogy also in a religious and architectural sense, in its relation to the space that the chapel represents. The piece shows a man on his back, who ascends towards the surface of a calm water in slow-motion. Having reached the surface, he greedily breathes the air, slowly closes his eyes, only to sink back into the depths. After a while you

SOMETIMES ART WORKS EXACTLY the way you want it to: it surprises you and strikes a sensitive chord in your inner system of thoughts and emotions. It is not often it happens, but that makes it all the more delightful when it does happen. This was my experience of Annelie Wallin's installation *Svenska Hjärtan* ("Swedish Hearts") which opened in December at Andréhn Schiptjenko Gallery. One of the reasons for this was the unrefined impression I got at the door, which later turned out to contain both warmth and humor. What first appeared as a large construction which erected a wall between the room and the viewer, opened towards me after I had taken a turn halfway around the room. With scenographic force it put me into an environment which felt simultaneously remote, yet strangely familiar. *Svenska Hjärtan* is what one could call a classic installation where a "room" is formed within the gallery space which captures a multifaceted image of Swedish country life. Through an ingenuous construction of tables and planks, the artist has created an environment which images something very typical for this Swedishness: the forest, solitude, nature and the sound of bird song. Like artists David Hammond and Ilya Kabakov who built installations and staged environments based on their own heritage and cultures, Wallin has succeeded in communicating a visualization of the Nordic primeval forest, melancholy and romanticism without alluding to kitsch or nationalism. In the middle of all this there is a little transistor radio which plays a melancholy bird chirping, and there is a hammar wedged into one of the planks. You almost expect to hear the sound of coffee being sipped, and smell the sawdust and a freshly packed piece of snuff. In Swedish art, literature and music the mania for nature and its position as a national characteristic has periodically inspired masterpieces. Such a national romanticist movement is, of course, unthinkable today and many Nordic artists must feel that it is too marginalized and infected to work with this peripheral and exotic cultural heritage and

way from accusations that landscape painting is part of a romantic idealized false consciousness, to wild charges that it represents a brutish and phallogocentric display of mastery. The exhibition of recent works by Thomas Carlsson "Nature and Return" goes a long way towards developing a rebuttal of such often jaundiced views.

The premise of the works is deceptively simple, the representation of views from a train moving through the Swedish countryside. In some of the paintings the framing edge of the train window is visible and whilst this immediately sets up an 'out there' for nature's representation, by insisting on the instantaneity of a moment captured on a moving train we know this image to also be fantastic. The 'in here-ness' of memory both conscious and unconscious reflecting on the fleeting moment is as present in the works as any sense of externality. The work seems to challenge equally, readings that see nature in opposition to culture, as synonymous with it, or that regard nature as an invention of culture that thus a priori invents itself. It also seems shrewd enough to reject the rather silly post-modern argument that would annul both categories and regard everything as merely a product of discourse. Carlsson's position is more diversely layered, visible both in the content and method of execution of the included works. We see a winter landscape too coloured, too picture post-card to be true and yet, we also know that this excess is what confirms its actuality. The fading sunlight on winter snow is the product of both the physics of light and a tube of bright pigment. In many of the works there are curious anomalies that might be equally a peculiar phenomenon of nature or an artistic device. In one work there is a patch of blue paint that is either an unfinished portion of the canvas or the result of some rare weather conditions. We are unsure in this glance from the train if that was a water spout or a painterly trick. This confusion between representation as counterfeit and also as being at some level mimetically authentic is not the limit of these paintings. There is also a generative aspect, something that doesn't blithely dissolve the

disinterest in painting... is a disinterest in doing it again," wrote Judd in 1965, and many took his words at face value, both theoretically and practically. The mantra of the obsolescence of painting has been repeated ever since, occasionally in a very poignant way by artists like, for instance, Sherrie Levine. To persuade is however not the same thing as merely stating a fact.

These discussions are brought back to life but acquire wholly new dimensions when contemplating Nina Roos' paintings. Few artists feel as contemporary, despite the fact that her frameworks are patently derived from the High Modernism of the 50s. In short, she has pushed painting onwards without denying its history. Color fields gush forth on the surface to form soft, abstract patterns, stemming from what appears as an indeterminate point in the painting's "interior." These sliding and fascinating image worlds often make you think of sleep and other dreamy states.

This is however only one aspect of her work. In her most recent show at Lars Bohman she once more displays her capacity to contort and disgust, through a masterful command of her painterly means. There is, as usual, a soft and sweet quality in her images: light blue, pink and brown color fields merge and fuse. But they also have an obvious affinity to faeces, bodily fluids and make-up. The colors are sometimes mixed and creamy, sometimes neatly separated.

Roos' painting often refers to an ambivalent femininity. The tender and soft surfaces crack and pry open, twisting the image in unexpected directions. Such an experience is no doubt influenced by feminist theory, which is hard to avoid in Roos' case; this time, however, it feels as if the paintings were less eager to use such implications, rather opting for a more indeterminate way of cathecting, between attraction and repulsion.

Like her colleague Mariannan Uutinen, Roos has been able to punctuate many central myths about artistic conditions and taboos in the 90s, especially in the register of painting. She is no doubt one of Scandinavia's most important artists. The unwillingness to paint

no one else but the artist himself. The soundtrack, made up the sound of the sea (recorded in slow-motion) and the heavy breathing, is highly captivating and vital.

The first and third elements—joined together in the title *The Crossing*—deal with fire and water, and show a man (Bill Viola) walking towards the spectator in slow-motion, through a vast and sombre space. He finally comes to a point where his body occupies the whole screen. In the piece dedicated to fire, small flames and sparks appear at his feet. The man does not move, the fire takes hold and slowly spreads along his legs, and finally consumes the body, or rather makes it disappear. The fire slowly dies, leaving the space itself as the supreme master of this video space.

In the third and last space, the element of water follows the same principle, as it approaches from the dark depths and suddenly stops. Some drops of water transform into a rapid torrent, forming cascades, and then into a devastating flood, once again dissolving the body. The water draws back—in slow-motion—to end up in a small drop of water accompanied by a heavy sound, to once again reveal an empty and dark space.

These three "scenes" are shown simultaneously. In each one, we witness the disintegration of the human body, a disappearance without any sense of sorrow, where the image dissolves into obscurity, only to recommence a new cycle. You feel tempted to employ a religious vocabulary to discuss this show—its the only register which seems appropriate. And the title "Trilogy" has without doubt a double sense: artistic, as well as theological—the latter stemming from the religious character of the settings.

Whether or not this has been the purpose of the artist, this mystical intention pervades the beauty of these three subjects and the way in which they are executed, it gives them a powerful philosophical and theological dimension. The spectator is indeed confronted with a mature, whole and complete work.