

Andreas Eriksson

The daily walk in the forest, a view out of the window, the play between light and shadow which because of a passing car is reflected back into the living room, birds colliding with the studio window – small quotidian, yet somehow distorted, events make up the foundation for the work of Swedish artist Andreas Eriksson. In his quiet, played down and poetic works, there are no sudden movements, rather a subtle keynote that envelops the entire production. However, Eriksson's work is in no way limited – quite the contrary, it incorporates multiple media, expressions and themes, but with an overall consistency which balances the work, making it concise. Whether working in sculpture, painting or photography, Eriksson's work is softened by this steady poetic keynote.

Andreas Eriksson (b. 1975) has lived near Hällekis, on the Swedish countryside, since 2000. It is this bucolic environment with its surrounding nature and isolated relation to the outside world, which comprise Eriksson's motifs. Though his work is far removed from classical landscape painting, it is in this way that Eriksson draws inspiration from the Romantic Nordic tradition. Eriksson's approach to nature can be rather counterintuitive, directing attention toward seemingly insignificant, marginal details or events, which we in our ceaseless experience of the world tend to overlook: Molehills, bird droppings on the windowpane, two parallel branches, piles of snow in a row. With a finely tuned sensibility the artist registers these impressions and allows them to come to life in works often made up of series. In working in serial format Eriksson conducts investigations in formalism. It is in many ways a basic interest in painting as a medium and its artistic effects which forms the foundation for Eriksson's artistic approach. In a strange way Eriksson's work is both conceptual and painterly, in many ways bridging the historical rift between these two contrasting approaches. The colour, the brushstrokes, the surface of the work and the effect of the paint – the tiny nuances and the minute details are dealt with great care and sensibility. The works are painterly on the whole, yet simultaneously form conceptual meta-

reflections on painting itself. Questions of what a painting really is, and how it gains its meaning – formally, technically, conceptually, symbolically – are in this way embedded in Eriksson's works and are projected onto the viewer.

The content of Eriksson's work is often characterized by uniting the formal, the conceptual and the thematic, facilitating an overall sense of incisiveness and rigorous study. For instance the ephemeral seems to saturate the work: Shadow, light, snow, molehills, dead birds, reflections in windowpanes, tufts of grass and withered bushes are all recurring elements in Eriksson's work, thus expressing the ephemeral both on a formal and a metaphoric level. Concerning the ephemeral the artist himself says: *I experience the painting as a picture of a moment in time, a sort of optical being which has to be accepted as a space in itself before we can step into this spaciousness, the birds [Content is a Glimpse] have made the mistake of believing in an illusion (mirroring) and have paid with their lives.*

In the group show *real inside – unreal outside* at Galleri Susanne Ottesen in 2007, Eriksson contributed with a wall installation combining photography, oil painting and airbrush, in which the momentary and the ephemeral were the thematic elements. At first glance, the largest piece on the wall, the shadow painting, *Bil passerar 22.10 den 12.08.07*, appears to be just a big monochromatic black surface, but on further investigation something is revealed within the darkness. The title refers to a moment – 10.10 PM, August 12th, 2007 – where the reflections of a passing car have pierced the darkness in the artist's living room. Eriksson has captured this microscopic event along with the reflection of his silhouette on the window in a quiet and dark universe of soft grey tones. The work has been painted with airbrush using a special paint and was subsequently painted over by a car painter, who has finished the entire surface in monochrome black. Because of the special properties of the original airbrush paint, it transcends the monochrome black surface of the car paint. Hereby the shadow painting quietly reveals itself, almost as a blurred Polaroid, barely visible and only as an ephemeral shadow: *My interest in shadows has to do with my fascination with things that are ephemeral. Things that appear and disappear and just leave traces in one's memories and emotions*, says the artist. Beside the shadow painting in the wall

installation is a small oil painting in which the paint has been applied with large visible brushstrokes in multiple tactile layers, in contrast to the shadow painting's smooth surface. With its brown/yellow colour the painting becomes substantial and material in comparison to the immateriality of the shadow painting. The photographs, which are placed in between the two paintings, unite the light and the heavy depicting the lightness of the snow covered blankness and the weight of Nordic nature. Where the shadow painting is a picture of the surrounding world being projected into the home of the artist, the photographs can be seen as the artist's projections onto the landscape outside. The photographs become, in the same way as classical landscape painting, images of an internal sense of being, and the quiet snow covered Swedish forest landscape expresses a feeling of meditative, slightly melancholic, deep Nordic quietness and calm.

Closely connected with shadow is of course light, and light plays a central role in Eriksson's paintings too, often as a diminutive marker of a shift in mood, atmosphere and intensity. For instance in the window paintings from the exhibition *High, Low & in Between* at Galleri Susanne Ottesen in 2010, where light, shadow and reflections are extremely fine components, which reflect the unique expression of each work: A shadow on the sky, which transforms the entire composition, a tiny splotch on the windowpane, a view through a half open window, in which a small change of perspective distorts the entire motif. It is in no way dramatic light settings that interest the artist – rather he looks toward a played down, unspectacular and extremely delicate play of light. In his sculptural works, light plays a big part as well, amongst others in the work *Peripeti* from 2006, where a gathering of various sources of light – flashlights, candelabra and candlesticks – are transformed into ceramic sculptures. In their transformation into another material, these light sources become dysfunctional, yet precisely for this reason they attract attention to themselves, thus forcing the spectator to reflect upon light both concretely and metaphorically. The transformation of something readymade-like into another material is a recurring element in Eriksson's sculptural works – as exemplified in the series *Content is a Glimpse* and *Molehills*, which are comprised of bronze casts of birds that have collided into window of his studio, and bronze casts of molehills found near his house, respectively. The

molehills play with sculpture in the classical sense and become an extension of art historian Rosalind Krauss' famous essay *Sculptures in the Expanded Field*: The plinths are eliminated and the molehills extend out over the gallery floor. Out into space and down to earth – almost down *into* the earth, since the material of the molehills also refers to the mother substance of sculpture itself, earth and clay. This deep and substantial aspect of the molehills almost undermines the defined and elevated body of classical bronze sculpture. The sculptural works place themselves somewhere in between matter and impression: The original random character of the molehills and the dead bodies of the birds are maintained, but at the same time transformed and changed because of the artist's intervention and their placement in the institutional setting of the gallery space. About the transformation of the dead birds, the artist says: *I have attempted to create a "happy ending" through making casts of the birds and leaving the cast channels, so that the birds sit in their new incarnation on something akin to branches*. For a brief moment in time the birds believed in the illusive reflection of the window, and now they are cast in bronze in a metamorphosis with the casting channels that – just like the molehills correspond to subterranean channels and dirt – point to a sort of sculptural "zero point" – the very beginning of sculpture itself – and now in a strange backward way yet again have become "nature" or branching.

The ephemeral, the illusion and the ambiguous all mark an openness, which encourages the spectator to sense experience and reflectively take part in the events and themes that the artist subtly points toward. Furthermore, the white snow in the works can be compared to the idea of the white canvas and the openness of the work: With my painting I often feel that in the end I want to come back to this openness of the white canvas and just offer a file for projections to the onlooker... You end up with a situation where at the same time you know and forget that both paintings and photographs are illusions. You may enter their world and use it as a ground for your own projections.

Andreas Eriksson has exhibited internationally at Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig in Vienna in 2008, Momentum

in Moss in 2009, and Moderna Museet in Stockholm in 2010 to name a few. In 2007 Andreas Eriksson received the Baloise Art prize for his contribution to Art Statements in Basel, and he has been chosen to solo-exhibit at the Nordic pavilion at the Venice Biennale 2011.

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