

STOCKHOLM POWER BROTH

The art scene in Sweden has traditionally been concentrated in Stockholm. There are a tremendous range of commercial galleries, several Kunsthalls and a Modern Museum here – in short a lot of art for quite a small population. There has, however, been some stagnation in the larger institutions in Stockholm lately. With the recent shift in the Kunsthalls of the southern cities of Lund and Malmö following the appointment of two young directors – Lars Grambye and Åsa Nacking respectively – combined with the energy of the Rosarium in Malmö led by Charles Esche, Stockholm will have a competing nexus in the future.

In keeping up with what Hans Ulrich Obrist and Laurence Bossé, writing in the catalogue for the 1998 exhibition *Nuit Blanche*, called the 'Nordic Miracle', the careers of Swedish artists like Henrik Håkansson, Ann-Sofi Sjöén or Annika von Hauswolff have flourished. Nevertheless this has been something of a struggle for the generation that is just a few years younger as it is only recently that a space opened up that is big enough for them to build international careers. The artists entering the scene are very ambitious and as it happens, good-looking. Perhaps the best example is Annika Larsson, who had a large solo show last summer at the Museum für Gegenwartskunst in Basel. At the moment it seems as if everyone wants to exhibit Larsson's videos, and who can blame them? Her films are fresh and have a multifaceted potential for interpretation. Her camera lingers on details, and her subject matter is almost always men and the interplay between men. While Larsson is currently perhaps the brightest young star, there are several artists who look likely to join her.

In the Italian Pavilion at the last Venice Biennial, curated by Francesco Bonami and Daniel Bribbaum, several young Swedish artists stood out. Among them was Jonas Dahlberg,

whose works were previously shown at Manifesta 2002. Dahlberg documents the interiors of intricate paper architectural models in such a manner that when the resultant videos are projected the displacements of scale and reality make your perception wander and your brain work overtime. Johanna Billing's video *Project for a Revolution* was shown in the pavilion's café, which is perhaps precisely the right place for revolutions. The most interesting young

artist from Sweden (although he originates from Uruguay) in the Italian Pavilion was probably Juan Pedro Fabra Guemberena. His approach is that of a painter, no matter what expression or medium he uses, be it video, film, photography or even music. In Venice, he used a series of images and videos of the Swedish military and landscape to present something of a paradox: Sweden is supposed to be 'neutral' and has not been involved in any wars for several hundred years and yet it manufactures guns and sells them to other countries. Fabra Guemberena will be exhibiting at Statements in Basel 2004.

Cheaper rents and a larger art scene are attracting many Swedish artists to Berlin, and Johan Zetterquist is one of them. His installations incorporate pretty much any kind of medium one could imagine. He often shows sculptures and drawings made as proposals for public artworks, the most recent example of which is *Make-Our Tower: Tower Solution For Flat Cities* (2003), an architectural model of a skyscraper, each floor accessible by car with a parking lot on top. Katarina Löfdahl, also Berlin based, works mainly with video featuring abstract content – be it computer animated or abstracted images from the real world – that is closely connected to an accompanying soundtrack. Meditative or almost hallucinogenic at times, her videos and projects blur the



Annika Larsson, *Blind*, 2003. Courtesy: the artist and Artforum/Christiansen/Orlino/Schirmer

boundaries of art, music video, kitsch and design.

Gunilla Klingberg and Peter Geschwind, two artists who often work together, showed in the IASPI (International Studio Programme in Sweden) at Venice. Klingberg has been working with logos and branding for several years, while Geschwind creates sculptures from a range of well-known packaging. In Venice, they showed a large sculpture made out of plastic bags from different supermarkets, an ingenious mix of the two artists' work.

There are of course many interesting artists still based in Stockholm and while some are perhaps not yet known to a wider audience, they should be soon. Johan Thurfjell is preoccupied with narratives and how they are conveyed, be it in the form of texts, manuscripts, films or images. How the narrative is being told, or retold, affects how we comprehend the message and the reality. His latest exhibition, at one of the hippest galleries in Stockholm, showed a complex architectural structure/sculpture that seemed to be built from the artist's writing desk. The title, *Reach Out and Touch Faith* gave it a further poetic resonance. A different kind of poetry or narrative seems to be lurking in the fragile drawings of Roger Andersson. Tender watercolour drawings portray beautiful landscapes, flowers and miniature people, who can have horns like the