

# IMMORTAL WORKS

“Blinding ignorance does mislead us.  
O! Wretched mortals, open your eyes...



# IMMORTAL WORKS

VASA KONSTHALL

GOTHENBURG, SWEDEN

November 7, 2009 - January 31, 2010

ISBN 978-91-978417-0-2



Printed in Sweden



## **INTRODUCTION**

“Immortal Works” represents a milestone in the new millennium. For the first time, two of the most committed and reputable classical/realist environments in Europe are able to unite their strengths, in an exhibition that should ripple the waters of the art world for many years to come.

So why is this exhibition so important? - Even though there are still a few communities who remain dedicated to the classical/realist tradition, they have all been scattered and isolated for a long time. The idea behind “Immortal Works” is to encourage cooperation between figurative painters and sculptors worldwide. This exhibition will also make the critics, media and public aware of an undeniable fact:

To us, the humanistic tradition is still extremely important. Technical skills and narrative content are qualities we strive for, and we have spent many years acquiring these abilities. We will forever continue our pursuit to restore the respect and understanding of what we do, and what we love. There are plenty of us, from many different origins, and we all offer an alternative to the elements that dominate the art world of our time. Bit by bit, we are patiently rebuilding a tradition that was all but lost. Our dedication is immense and our determination unbreakable.

Now we have found each other as communities, and from this moment onward, our only direction is ascent.

## **ABOUT THE EXHIBITION**

The Florence Academy of Art and The Nerdrum School have never worked together in a direct way. Student and teacher exchanges have occurred occasionally, although that has been of a more coincidental nature, based on individual choices. Both communities share many of their values and philosophies. Consequently, a serious figurative painter or sculptor would naturally be drawn to both.

Being part of both environments, I always knew that we could create something extraordinary if we were to do something together. The challenge however, was to find a person with enough courage to realize a classical/realist exhibition of this magnitude. It seemed impossible for a long time. That was until we met Håkan Lindblom at Vasa Konsthall. It took him about two seconds to say yes, when we first presented him with the idea of creating the event you are about to see. His positive spirit and constructive attitude has made this exhibition possible.

Working together with Jan-Ove Tuv, from The Nerdrum School, has also been a great experience. Even though we come from slightly different angles and our opinions have differed from time to time, I feel that we have definitely come to a mutual conclusion and that we can both look at this exhibition with a sense of pride, unity and a deeper understanding of what the tradition has to offer.

In the process of selecting the works, we all started to realize that the focus of the show had to be more than just displaying good figurative work. It had to represent the essence of what we as classical/realist painters and sculptors are trying to do. Something which is driven by a humanistic force so powerful. "Immortal Works" may thus be perceived as provocative by some, though inciting has never been an end in itself.

The works in this exhibition merely reflect what we believe in, and the eternal human condition: Timeless, aesthetic qualities; Love, suffering, endeavor, and defeat; Hope, harmony, reflection, and the fragility of life itself.

Finally. All the pieces displayed in this exhibition are examples of great, figurative painting and sculpture. Learning how to create work at this level, requires many years of hard study and serious dedication. In fact, as a classical/realist painter or sculptor you never finish evolving. It is a life long commitment. I recommend you as a viewer, to look at the works carefully and with an open mind. They have all taken a great deal of time and skill to produce and deserve more than just a casual glimpse. The subjects in many of them are as thoughtful as they are timeless; Immortal.

Joakim Ericsson,

Academic Director, The Florence Academy of Art/Gothenburg.  
Associate with The Nerdrum School.







The Florence Academy of Art

## VISION

The Florence Academy of Art promotes a conscious and unique commitment to the spirit of classical realism. Convinced of the need for a return to discipline in art, the Academy seeks to equip its students with the complete palette of technical skills essential to the classical realist.

Mastery of technique alone is not enough, however. While our vision is founded on the timeless classical canons of beauty, based on a detailed study of nature, it is invested with a highly contemporary relevance. Standing on the shoulders of the great masters, the Academy is dedicated to the evolution of classical realism, not its preservation. Students are expected to articulate individual artistic insights that extend the tradition into new and uncharted areas.

For many reasons, with the approach of the end of the 20th century, Western society began to question, reject and in some cases destroy much of what it had inherited. At the FAA, we like to believe our mission in the early 21st century is to reintegrate the multiple elements of the humanist tradition in establishing a new synthesis – one that can contribute meaningful images, with the power to inspire future generations.

Importantly, we must share our knowledge and resources – not only to further understanding of our own work, but to ensure that the next generation of artists is equipped to carry on the tradition. We are all engaged on different aspects of what was once a more complete body of knowledge.

## **THE WORKS ON DISPLAY**

The seemingly cohesive community of The Florence Academy of Art embraces a multitude of diverse styles and points-of-view. A layperson might cast all these styles together, but the FAA works displayed in this exhibition highlight an important distinction: some of the artists are consciously working in the spirit of “the tradition,” some are not. Common to all, however, is that they have been trained in the spirit of this tradition.

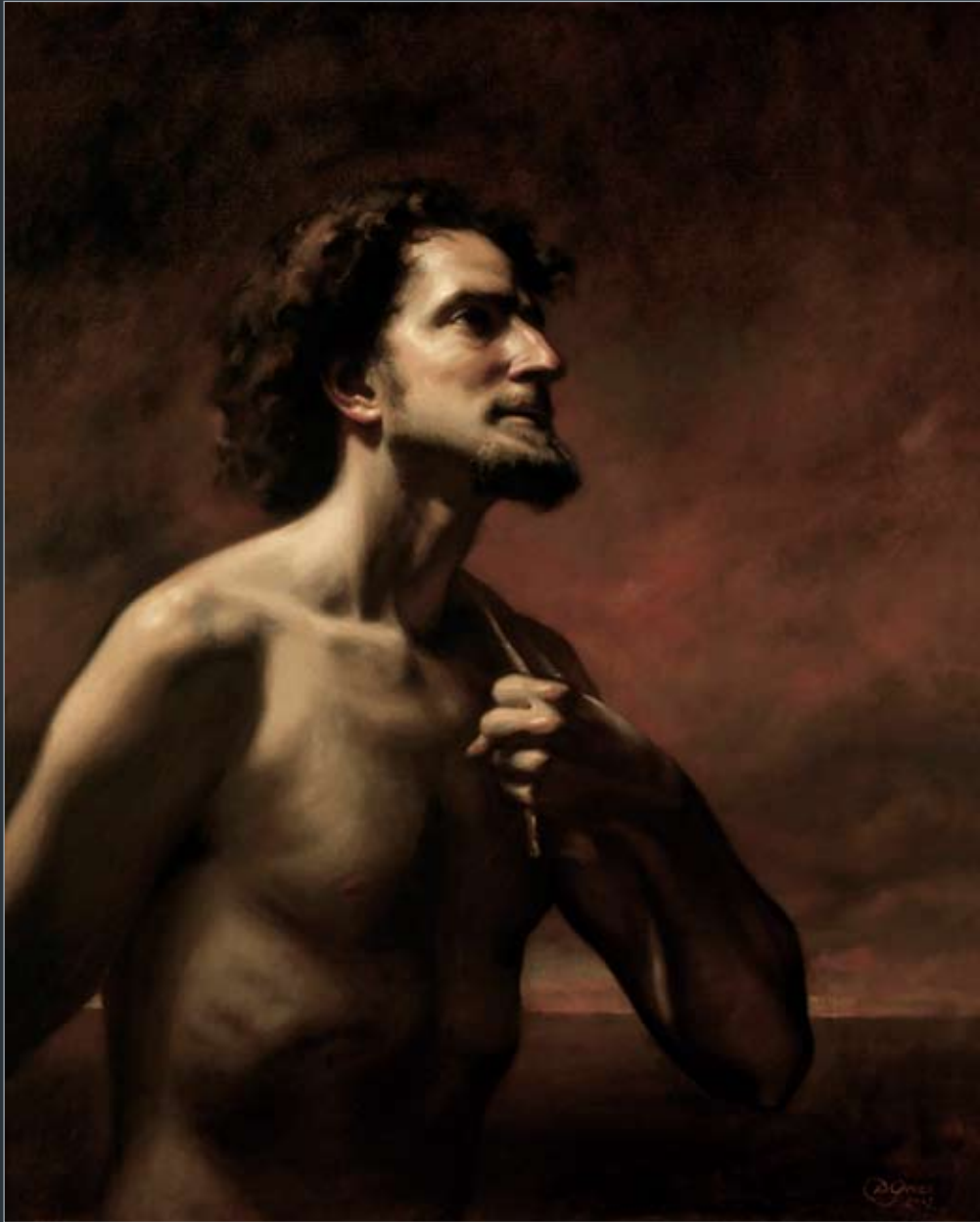
The “tradition” I refer to is that of the humanist spirit in Western art. It has its origins in the work of the Greek sculptors and painters who tried to faithfully capture the forms of nature, thereby expressing ideas of beauty and significance. The tradition evolves continuously, changed and fortified by the many generations of artists who have sought meaning in the human condition, sharing their insights through their works.

Although working in the tradition, this does not mean our subject matter and artistic concerns are the same. As demonstrated by the works themselves, each creates a unique body of work based on an individual artistic focus. This said, we have all received many years of academic training directed at learning the same visual “language” – the language of classical realism. As artists, we utilize this language to articulate our vision, in the same way poets use words, rhythms and form to craft poems.

Daniel Graves

Founder and Director of The Florence Academy of Art





**DANIEL GRAVES**  
"The explorer"



**DANIEL GRAVES**  
"Pots, bricks and garlic"

40x50 cm



**DANIEL GRAVES**

“Song of the sea”

110x130 cm





**DANIELA ASTONE**

“Little Eva”

75x65 cm



**DANIELA ASTONE**

“Solitude”

45x55 cm



**STEPHEN BAUMAN**

“Gender”

55x40 cm



**JURA BEDIC**  
“Perpetual motion”

75x95 cm



**JURA BEDIC**  
“White composition”  
55x65 cm



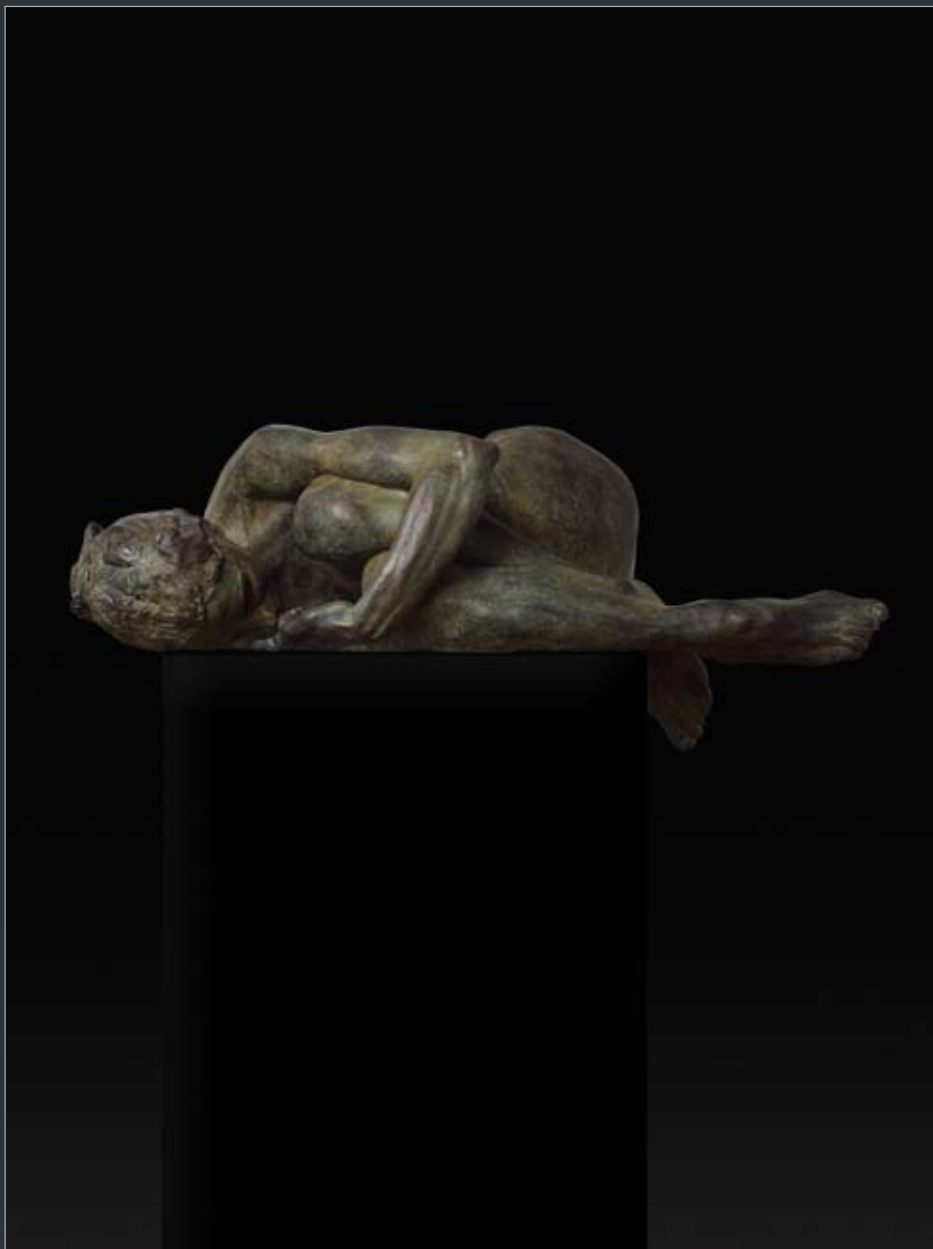
**ANDREAS BIRATH**  
“Through Cataclysm”  
125x200 cm



**LOTTA BLOKKER**

“Pas de deux”

H: 160 cm



**LOTTA BLOKKER**

“Precipice”

H: 60 cm





**ROBERT BODEM**  
"La Marionetta"

H: 165 cm



**HUNTER EDDY**

“Senza segreti”

115x57 cm



**HUNTER EDDY**

“Segreti”

115x57 cm



**JOAKIM ERICSSON**

“The chalice”

87x67 cm



**JOAKIM ERICSSON**

"Echo"

195x145 cm



**JOAKIM ERICSSON**

“Fool holding key”

65x75 cm



**JOAKIM ERICSSON**

“The last combattant”

85x70 cm



**LOUISE FENNE**  
"Winter profile"  
46x38 cm





**LOUISE FENNE**  
"Lene with shawl"  
65x45 cm



**HEGE ELISABETH HAUGEN**

“Sonata”

75x89 cm



**HEGE ELISABETH HAUGEN**

No title

85x130 cm



**MAUREEN HYDE**  
"Ghost of a conqueror"

50x55 cm



**URBAN LARSSON**  
"Woman at the age of 77"  
45x50 cm



**ALICIA PONZIO**

“Centaur”

H: 78 cm



**ALICIA PONZIO**  
“Searching for the present”

H: 100 cm



**CODY SWANSON**

“Christ on the cross”

H: 67 cm





**CHARLES WEED**  
“Man with Forget-me-nots”  
85x105 cm



**TOBY WRIGHT**

“Dogma”

110x70 cm

## EXCEPTIONAL WORK

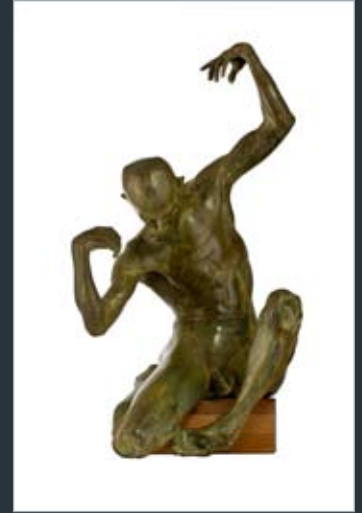
The following images are examples of earlier, important works from the FAA.



**DANIELA ASTONE**  
"Le Profughe"



**ANDREAS BIRATH**  
"Lost in hindsight"



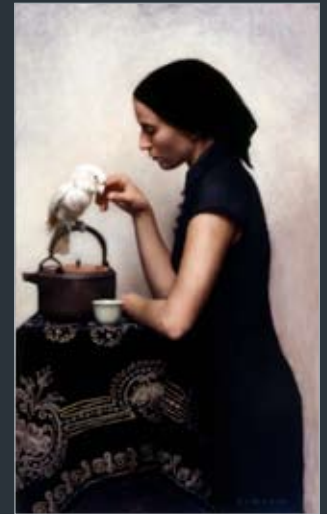
**ROBERT BODEM**  
"Petrouska"



**SIMONA DOLCI**  
"Maternità"



**HUNTER EDDY**  
"Aquarius"



**LOUISE FENNE**  
"Woman with parrot"



**URBAN LARSSON**

“Portrait of Lenie, an artists model since the 1950s”



**MATTHEW LAWRENCE ALMY**

“The Ebenezer stone”



**TOBY WRIGHT**

“The journey”



**CODY SWANSON**

“Judas”



**CHARLES WEED**

“Portrait of a man”



**GRAVES, DANIEL**

[www.danielgraves.com](http://www.danielgraves.com)

**ASTONE, DANIELA**

[www.daniela-astone.com](http://www.daniela-astone.com)

**BAUMAN, STEPHEN**

[www.stephenbaumanart.blogspot.com](http://www.stephenbaumanart.blogspot.com)

**BEDIC, JURA**

[www.florenceacademyofart.com](http://www.florenceacademyofart.com)

**BIRATH, ANDREAS**

[www.andreasbirath.com](http://www.andreasbirath.com)

**BLOKKER, LOTTA**

[www.lottablokker.com](http://www.lottablokker.com)

**BODEM, ROBERT**

[www.robertbodem.com](http://www.robertbodem.com)

**DOLCI, SIMONA**

[www.simonadolci.com](http://www.simonadolci.com)

**EDDY, HUNTER**

[www.florenceacademyofart.com](http://www.florenceacademyofart.com)

**ERICSSON, JOAKIM**

[www.florenceacademyofart.com](http://www.florenceacademyofart.com)

**FENNE, LOUISE**

[www.louisefenne.com](http://www.louisefenne.com)

**HAUGEN, HEGE ELISABETH**

[www.florenceacademyofart.com](http://www.florenceacademyofart.com)

**HYDE, MAUREEN**

[www.maureenhyde.com](http://www.maureenhyde.com)

**LARSSON, URBAN**

[www.urbanlarsson.com](http://www.urbanlarsson.com)

**ALMY, MATTHEW LAWRENCE**

[www.mlalmy.com](http://www.mlalmy.com)

**PONZIO, ALICIA**

[www.aliciaponzio.com](http://www.aliciaponzio.com)

**SWANSON, CODY**

[www.codyswansonsculpture.com](http://www.codyswansonsculpture.com)

**WEED, CHARLES**

[www.charlesweed.com](http://www.charlesweed.com)

**WRIGHT, TOBY**

[www.florenceacademyofart.com](http://www.florenceacademyofart.com)





KITSCH



## WITH ALL DUE RESPECT

Edvard Munch had several houses. Coming to one of them in order to paint, he had often forgotten the keys. So he had to find someone who could open the door. The person concerned would receive half a Krone for the job. But every now and then, Munch had forgotten money as well... At one such occasion, he tried giving away a print instead. Of course he meant well, but the reaction was merciless. Accept such things? No thanks let me see the money!

In a similar situation, facing another locked door and without cash, he compensated his helper with an etching. This man, unable to say no, accepted. Finally home, he let his wife take care of the matter. She stapled it onto the wall of the outdoor toilet, in the company of cut-outs from illustrated magazines.

Later, the same man received a big painting as payment. Again he felt there was no choice, and brought the piece of canvas home. His wife, helpful as always, stapled it onto the loft ceiling. As next Christmas approached, she cleaned the house. The painting was carefully burnt and the cut-outs thrown along with the print. New magazines had arrived, with new illustrations.

Inger Alver Gløersen describes this in her book *The Munch I met*. It is the funniest thing, though. Several times, as I have recounted the story, something strange has occurred: People start laughing. Presumably they regard it as entertainment? Personally, I would be glad to relinquish accounts like these, so we could focus on the works. However, such stories manifest the necessity of respect – and what happens when it is non-existent, or fades. Greek sculptures with heads, arms and legs chopped off. A third of the 17th century painter Georges de la Tour's works eradicated; for centuries he did not have "a name". Consequently, his works could not possibly be of any value...

The Norwegian writer Sigrid Undset once said that the hearts of men remain the same. I believe this is correct and further, that these hearts face a choice between two cultures.

The first culture is based on a single tenet: quality and talent is measured by *what* you know. This culture always exists, but varies in strength. It is the precondition for an Ilya Repin, who became the most celebrated painter of tsarist Russia. Even though he was of non-noble descent. His skills could not be disregarded.

Repin's work sprang from the European culture, in turn born out of seven centuries of Greek Humanism. This is a mindset which holds a painter to be more skilled the more he can breathe life into what he paints. It is the story of Pygmalion, who created a marble sculpture so vivid that she stepped down as a living woman.

The most profound victory of this culture is that it made the talents of man his safety net.

The other culture assigns grades according to *who* you know. This path is also present in varying degrees. A couple of years ago, the German magazine *art* interviewed several prominent curators. Their opinions were unanimous: Skill in handcraft is an outdated litmus test for judging quality in art. In such a situation, the talent becomes dependant on personal sympathy or antipathy. This obviously affects the participants of this exhibition: Their skills have become a disadvantage.

Notwithstanding, the contemporary art world experiences as little envy at the sight of their talents, as the Christian iconoclasts envied the Greek sensuality. The iconoclasts simply knew that it was ideologically wrong. Assured by this, they could oust all respect for the ability to transform stone into soft skin.

The comparison might seem exaggerated. Rembrandt's paintings are not thrown onto the fire. Rodin's bronzes are not melted down or drowned at sea. And of course curators do not mind old master works – as long as they are executed by an *old* master. The art world needs them as forerunners of 21st century art. Contemporary masters would disarrange the official art history. There would be no "improvement" if the development went from "Rembrandt to Rembrandt". Still, the curator is more cultivated than the traditional iconoclast. The sanctions are more subtle. A curator does not burn a beautiful portrait or crush a marble figure. He laughs; he does not choose it for an exhibition. As a consultant, he gives advice not to buy such things. The curator knows that a sincere, figurative work is wrong ideologically. On the whole, this way of judging a work is signified by how its qualities are never taken into consideration.

The painters and sculptors in this catalogue share certain fundamental values. Their discipline is based on handcraft, the motifs are sincere and the faces are devoid of irony. They are united in a quest for the archetypal, detached from time.

In order to attain this, one studies anatomy, composition, handling of paint and clay, etc. One hears of Michelangelo's forgery of a Greek Cupid figure. Upon his exposure, he received the commission for the famed Bacchus – his "crime" proved his skill! One smiles, thinking of Leonardo. He bragged about a painting of the Madonna. She was so beautiful and vividly painted that the customer implored him to paint over her religious attributes. The man desired her, but was plagued by feelings of guilt. In the end he had to send her away from his house.

And one hears that Michelangelo and Leonardo were great artists.

Yet, "art" shares the fate of many other words, in that its meaning is the exact opposite of what one thinks. Anyone who seeks to know more, may find Larry Shiner's *The Invention of Art* helpful. Originally, there were liberal arts (such as mathematics and logic) and mechanical arts (such as navigation and gardening). Up until then, "art" had been a neutral term for "discipline", "science" or "knowledge". It referred to rational knowledge, which could be learned and taught.

But then – in the 1740's - painting, sculpture, architecture, poetry and music were gathered under the category "fine arts". In and of itself, this was less grave. However, that all changed as (mostly) German philosophers started discussing what values unified this new group of arts. They were determined to separate them from the other groups, with the result that handcraft had nothing to do with the matter - it seemed to supply the idea with a greater nimbus of spirituality. In fact, it was made clear that the "fine arts" represented the opposite of handcraft. (To separate this new meaning from the older, I will in the following write "Art" when referring to "the fine arts"). The philosopher Kant is unmistakably clear: You are only making Art when you do not know what you are doing. Thus creates a true genius. This is the background for the admiring tone of the phrase "Oh, no-o – it's more than just handcraft!"

But it did not stop at that. Gripping the audience emotionally was derided as "barbaric". Kant had an idea of the perfect, "objective" judgment, in which there was no room for sentimentality or pathos. Art was to be contemplated with indifference.

Later, the philosopher Hegel said Art should reflect its time, and participate in progress. His addition left little for the talent to rejoice in, as a work without relation to a time was rendered worthless. Hegel identified "progress" with the unwinding of handcraft and sensual representation. These apprehensions fertilize the laughter of the curator.

Yet Leonardo knew nothing of them. He was proud of his ability to fool the viewer. It proved his skills! He tried to get out of time, and advised others to do the same (by not painting contemporary clothing, f. ex.). Despite this, Art historians refer to him as an Artist. What they gain from this is obvious: it makes video Art the climax of a long "tradition" – in the face of the fact that Leonardo represented opposite values.

The nature of their logic is familiar: 1) Artists follow their time. 2) Leonardo was an Artist. 3) Leonardo would have made video Art today. So saying, his aura is injected into the contemporary Artist. Blood transfusion as an academic principle. It is like publishing a history of the combustion engine – from the Greek horse to the modern trailer.

So how is the standing today for those who want to tell stories through painting and sculpture? I once asked a gallerist what she looked for in a work: originality or quality? "Originality" was her immediate response. If a painter had entered her gallery with a Rembrandt portrait – made today, but at the same level of quality – she would have rejected it.

Did she understand the consequences of what she said? In such a culture, an Ilya Repin does not stand a chance.

As the Art values spread with the advancement of the 19th century, the ability to perceive talent was gradually corroded. A successful composition became a lie; a nude false; a sincere face unmodern and untrue. Kitsch. A difficult word? To the curator it has the same ring as "talent". Words are not neutral. They may help or counteract people's possibilities of seeing the work they are standing in front of.

A word does not improve a work, but may secure its survival.

Basically, it's H. C. Andersen's story of the swan all over again: it was ugly – by duck standards.

Jan-Ove Tuv  
Kitsch painter





**ODD NERDRUM**  
"Back"



**JONNY ANDVIK**

“Water spirit”

105x125 cm



**HELENE KNOOP**

"Urania"

100x120 cm





**HELENE KNOOP**

“Calliope”

100x120 cm



**HELENE KNOOP**  
"Truth unveiled by time"  
170x200 cm



**BORIS KOLLER**

“Torskenøya”

84,9x136,8 cm



**BORIS KOLLER**  
"From Medfjordvær"

89x143,5 cm



**MARIA KREYN**

“Pile”

101,5x127 cm



**MARIA KREYN**  
“Karamazov (self-portrait)”  
40,5x48 cm



**MARIA KREYN**

“Botticelli stairs”

42x58,5 cm



**JAN-OVE TUV**

“Discovery”

178x208 cm





**JAN-OVE TUV**  
"Old woman"  
24x34 cm



**JAN-OVE TUV**  
"Happiness"  
80x100 cm

## EXCEPTIONAL WORK

The following images are examples of earlier, important works by Kitsch painters.



**ODD NERDRUM**  
"Man in boat"



**ODD NERDRUM**  
"Man with a fiddle"



**ODD NERDRUM**  
"Love divided"



**ROBERT DALE WILLIAMS**  
"Wrath of the tyrant"



**MONIKA HELGESEN**  
"Dancing couple"



**MONIKA HELGESEN**  
"The secret"



**HELENE KNOOP**  
"Manhood"



**NERDRUM, ODD**

[www.nerdrum.com](http://www.nerdrum.com)

**ANDVIK, JONNY**

[www.andvik.com](http://www.andvik.com)

**DALE WILLIAMS, ROBERT**

[www.robertdalewilliams.com](http://www.robertdalewilliams.com)

**HELGESEN, MONIKA**

[www.monikahelgesen.com](http://www.monikahelgesen.com)

**KNOOP, HELENE**

[www.heleneknoop.com](http://www.heleneknoop.com)

**KOLLER, BORIS**

[www.boriskoller.com](http://www.boriskoller.com)

**KREYN, MARIA**

[www.creativeportfolio.org/mariakreyn/](http://www.creativeportfolio.org/mariakreyn/)

**TUV, JAN-OVE**

[www.janovetuv.com](http://www.janovetuv.com)



...they whose heart is firm, and whose conscience approves their conduct,  
will pursue their principles unto death.”

*Leonardo da Vinci*



This catalogue was produced for Vasa Konsthall in collaboration with Chalmersfastigheter.



© 2009, All rights reserved

Design and layout: [www.dahlgrendesign.se](http://www.dahlgrendesign.se)



## MEETINGS THROUGH ART

Chalmersfastigheter's commitment to and investment in Vasa Konsthall aims to offer students and employees at Chalmers University of Technology, as well as other residents of Gothenburg, an opportunity to gain new and different experiences. We would also like to see Vasa Konsthall functioning as a meeting place for business, society and Chalmers.

It is our hope that this and subsequent exhibitions will strengthen integration between the university campus and the rest of society.

Welcome to Vasa Konsthall.



