

Towards the naked image of the emotions

I was finally able to see them. Finally, the series of images I had been awaiting passed before my tired eyes. I have long yearned to see paintings that could bring me something more than surface appearance and the senseless scanty scraps of glossy adornment. I yearned to encounter an exhibition that strove to penetrate my heart's hunger.

And then they came before my eyes: Anna-Karin Björk's wonderful pictures, so beautifully filled with longing and life force. I was slowly filled with the liberating joy and euphoria that I so seldom experience, and only when I encounter painting that vibrates with the loud and passionately beautiful song of a profound heart.

Anna-Karin creates a pictorial world that the viewer can gradually conquer. A world of motives that embed themselves in your eyes and your heart, in a condition that I can find no other word to describe than love.

In my life's work as an art critic, I have found that I very rarely encounter art with the power to make me happy. But here I see a collection of pictures – paintings – that are filled to the brim and charged with low-key energy. Paintings that have gripped me with their keen barbs. Here, perhaps my words imply 'sharp' and 'dangerous' imagery, something that could injure or lacerate. But this isn't at all the case.

Instead, this artist offers the observer a ticket to a country in which beauty and intimacy rule. She invites us into a warm, thriving landscape and environments that blossom and quiver with the good life, the life that I encountered with such respect and joy in Ingmar Bergman's film "Den goda viljan" (The best intentions).

As well as her passion for art, Anna-Karin Björk is also creative in her role as an architect. This can be traced or read with great clarity in her painting. She almost always builds up environments in which it must be good for people to meet and live. Like Ingmar Bergman, she allows nature to speak.

I have learned the hard way that pictures, pictorial art, can be used in many ways. Art can have many, varying appearances and meanings. If we learn to 'read' the pictures, to see through the surface and find the artist's inner motivation (to the extent that one exists), we have more chance of finding deeper meaning in the pictures. And I firmly believe that Anna-Karin Björk's artistry embodies great reservoirs of inner power and appeal.

In Anna-Karin Björk's paintings, I see rarely or never brutal statements or definitive formulations. Instead, each painting contains a friendliness, a 'softness' that fills me with a feeling of true tenderness.

These are paintings I long to meet, to step into and wander through. The artist opens the doors to a world where nothing has sharp edges or heavy weights.

Instead, Anna-Karin Björk coaxes forth an art of the light touch and the delicate mind. I feel that these paintings appeal to what is most fragile within me.

During my long career, including as an author of art books, I have learned a great deal about something I call co-creation. In a short letter, Olof Lagercrantz wrote that art is born in the eyes of the observer. He wrote in a heartfelt tone about the reader's co-creation of the poem, continuing:

"You who read, read with the heart.
You constantly contribute your own
perceptions and experiences."

Farewell Olof Lagercrantz. But I experience the same feeling of co-creation as important, as essential, when I see and absorb (and write about) Anna-Karin Björk's art. The two of us become one. And her paintings are the confirmation of our encounter.

I am able to step into her scenes, to stand on her stage, to feel the perfect white softness of the painting "Nattljus" (Vigorous) and to seek out a stronghold where I can rest in the painting entitled "Mellan himmel och hav" (Inbetween). We meet in the euphoria of becoming, and I am grateful that I have once again been able to encounter the magic of creation.

Thank you, Anna-Karin Björk!



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