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Text to an exhibition catalogue of Eek & Konrad at Landskrona – Mika Hannula

Squeeze and Stir –

The Beautifully Eclectic Works of Marcus Eek and Karsten Konrad

To comprehend who we are and where we are, we have to understand where we are coming from. And, consequently, to have an idea of what to do and where we might want to move towards, we need to have a grasp of, not the monolog version of history, but the inter-connected plural histories of our practices and professions.

History matters, right. But *how* does it matter? What are the strategies of facing the past but not getting stuck with it?

At the Landskrona exhibition, both artists are clearly and cleverly aware of where they are from – the visual references and the points of connections with the works. But what is remarkable with both the paintings of Marcus Eek and the sculptures of Karsten Konrad, is the particular and unique way of confronting the past so that it does really become part of the present.

To be sure, the strategy at use, and the strategy both artists have worked on now for two decades, is not an academic one. It does not glorify the contexts where it belongs to, and it does not try to deny it. Instead, it is a strategy that makes a virtue of the interpretational hick-ups; giving us a distorted, playful and physical reading and remake of histories past, present and future. It is the strategy of squeeze and stir.

With Marcus Eek, the references are obviously there. In various variations, we get the landscape, we get the horizon, and we get the flowers. But we get them in a way that is never one-to-one. These horizons shoot over or they play under – they hide and they ask us to seek. What we find is then always something that has become more, much more than the start-up shadow of its own self.

Like in the two-part painting called *Sicilian Opening*, we, for sure, get the flowers and they definitely are flowers situated into a composition. It is a composition as a painting that moves in and through its initial flatness and, well, starts to move in and out of its surface. This is then a set of flowers – with their colors, their inherent bold movements and their suggestive sensuous sensibilities – that give us sweat and tears, powerful longing and not so much clear-cut belonging but yet another wish to stay closer to the closing door: the doors that might hurt but doors that open up to a way of actualizing the most classical themes of painting in ways that are articulated through right here, right now.

It is a painting as in an opening. True, it provides us with enough of hints of where it comes from so that we don't get so easily confused. But it is an opening that asks us to dare, to come and play – play with the paintings, the expectations and aspirations that are embedded into them.

As with Karsten Konrad, the visual information of where does these contemporary sculptures come from are exactly as present as with Marcus Eek's paintings. With Eek, the trajectory of the years added up goes through centuries while with Konrad we get in to the heart of the modern times and especially the modern unfinished project. Something that we promised but never ever delivered. We land – with our imagination running – to the promises of the 1920's Russian constructivism and the birth of the legacy of Bauhaus.

What's unique with Konrad is how the future of the past is not revisited with the

past of the present. This is most concretely and physically manifested in the materials that are used. They might be shiny and cleaned up, but they are recycled. This is the very vengeance of thrown away materials that come back with a surprising and effective rebound. Not as a flat-faced irony, but as with a heart-felt texture of the materiality.

Like with the work titled *Bellamacchina*, we are looking at a beautifully constructed object. Connected with its tongue in cheek title, we stare at something – a collection of those something's as in former functioning materials from chairs and other everyday utensils – that is no longer doing what it was produced to perform. With this sculpture, the material things that was moved aside and on purpose forgotten, wakes up and shout to the top: tickling our awareness of the genealogy of everyday objects. There is a mix and a mixture. An object that has its discursive past but also a physical future.

In connection, and when brought together in a fantastic combination, both Eek and Konrad remind us with an effective elegance of the difference between knowing what and knowing how. And yes, this time around, this knowing *how* is created and generated with an open vision to the sites and situations of where it is made. This is a strategy that does not pretend to be neat and nice. This combination smells, and it gets on your face. It is provocative and confronting. It squeezes and it stirs – and then it becomes something else, something eclectic but something very very beautiful.

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