

Mats Bergström's Narrating Boxes

The Swedish painter Mats Bergström, born 1951, discovers his essential creative language at the beginning of the new millennium. Many years of traditional expressionistic painting – mostly oil on canvas – now open up to a completely new, simple and congenial structure where the emotionally loaded outpouring finds sufficient space and a clear organization. The spark of creativity and Mats Bergström's essence as an artist are captured and canalized into an easy-to-read, immediate, and strong experience which extends to invite the on-looker to participate freely in determining the composition at a given moment, its focus, angles and distances.

What then is this new form? During an experimental phase of interconnected serial paintings, Mats Bergström's new grammar and semantics come into being. It is a language that moves between traditional art's search for durability, and temporary installations' ambition to totally immerse the on-looker. An additional influence is that of virtual art's concept of motion, for which modern technology has prepared the way. The result is painted, mobile parallelepipeds, half the size of man. These boxes are easily positioned and with their flexible, liberating rotation in direct interaction with the looker-on they tell their stories. The installation is often extended through the use of a fixed, oblong and larger 2D wall counter-part whose task it is to stabilize and through association crystallize the intended expression. The material is still oil, now on agglomerate panel, the colours are warm, the handicraft experienced and skilled. Here the looker-on finds an easily accessible and carefully directed narrating flow having at its centre Humanity, intended both as individuals and as part of nature and of society.

The focus of Mats Bergström's attention is on human existence and activity both of which leave traces in the shape of signs. Some of these signs resemble aerial photos. Others are related to graffiti, Chinese symbols, hieroglyphs, runes or other marks or ornaments as known from various ethnic groups. Mats Bergström's boxes tell stories about the individual's relation to nature and to urbanized society. Here you'll find the artist's interpretation of the crowd. Perhaps impressions of crowds he experienced as a young man in Jerusalem and Damascus in the sixties, they are now filtered into the box and packaged as a symbol next to reminiscences of landscapes in Värmland, the region where Mats Bergström has his roots and home. Rotate and move the boxes, and new versions of one and the same story will take possession of the room!

Mats Bergström's new creative language convinces. In addition to providing an aesthetic experience in its own right, the narrating boxes express the artist's caring and worries about the future of mankind and can definitely be felt as an appeal for individual and collective conscience, responsibility and social commitment.





Mats Bergström, artist and painter

Kristinehamn, Sweden

Education and training

Nyckelviksskolan, Lidingö, 1972-73 (School of arts, crafts and design))
Konstfack, Stockholm, 1973-75 (University college of arts, crafts and design)

Scholarships and awards:

Josef Frank 1978
Kristinehamn's Cultural Award 2000
Lions Cultural Award 2002

Works in public ownership:

County of Värmland
Värmland's Society for Art
Kristinehamn's Society for Art
Municipality of Kristinehamn
Municipality of Karlstad
Karlstad University
Municipality of Storfors

Artistic decoration

Karlstad's and Kristinehamn's fire-stations
Bråtens Centrum Karlskoga
Scandinavian Nature, external mural decoration Karlstad

Exhibitions:

Individual exhibition Konsthallen Rådhuset Kristinehamn; Group exhibitions Kristinehamns konsthall; Autumn exhibitions Värmlands Museum/Värmlands Konstförening; Autumn exhibition Kristinehamns Konstmuseum/Värmlands Konstförening, Autumn exhibition Rackstamuséet Arvika; "Värmländsk framtida konst" ("Future Art in Värmland") Dalslands Museum; The Kristinehamn Artists' group exhibition Vågen Kristinehamn; Mariebergs Herrgård Karlstad; Galleri K Karlstad; Sundsbergsgård Sunne; Galleri M Mariestad; Prostladan Torsby; Tiomilaskogen; Kvarnen Filipstad; Mastmagasinet Kristinehamn; Folkets Hus Kristinehamn; Bjurbäckens hytta; Nordiska Galleriet Stockholm; Individual exhibition Vågen Kristinehamn; Konstfrämjandet Karlstad.

Thematic exhibitions:

Elsa Beskow exhibition Kristinehamn and Jönköping in collaboration with Millesgården (Municipality of Kristinehamn); John Bauer exhibition (Municipality of Kristinehamn); Basic history exhibition (Municipality of Kristinehamn); Archeological exhibition on Saxholmen (Värmlands Museum); Exhibition on the monumental Picasso sculpture in Kristinehamn in collaboration with Carl Nesjar.

Scenography:

Lekaresällskapet Christinateatern Kristinehamn; Danslinjen KPS Kristinehamns Praktiska Skola (Dance productions at Kristinehamn's vocational training school)

Mats Bergström is a member of the association of independent artists in Värmland, Sweden.