TONI HANZON-KURRASCH
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Impressions turned to emotional stories
Modern man travels through impressions. The constant search for the astonishing and the spectacular leads to bustling cities with skyscrapers seven miles high and to quiet places where wild strawberries grow. With even more amazing impressions accumulated, the mundane impressions become more and less vivid at the same time. Attempts to get back into the whirl winding life storm or its eye, have but one ending. With an arsenal of urgent impressions, the teller constructs a temporary story of a life.

Disjointed impressions might overlap each other or merge into something completely new. A new version of your self takes form. It might or might not confirm the old version. The illusion of who you thought you are becomes clear. Neither reinforced vowels or loose consonants can keep it intact. Soon the story is ground to dust between the jaws of the storyteller.

Toni Hanzon-Kurrasch, born in Stockholm, Sweden, has been living in Los Angeles since the late 1980’s. She feels equally at home in the metropolis and in a cottage in the countryside. Her latest 25 paintings, exhibited at Gallery Artlab in Stockholm, have titles, which place the motives in geographical locations. Some point to countries (China), to cities (Shanghai), non-specific sites with characteristic landmarks (Stenrös - Mound of Stones, Klippor - Cliffs), the elements of the earth (Vatten - Water) and locations with a social significance (Downtown). The titles Dans (Dance) and Ur skuggan (Out of the Shadow) deal with motion, which demands a physical relation to a physical room indoors or outdoors.

The title Solen (The Sun) could be a planet (located in space), be a poetic expression addressing an emotional state of mind or be the most important feature in a weather broadcast. Titles as Balans (Balance), Glädje (Joy), Frid...
(Peace) and Nyfiken (Curious) open up the gate to the realm of emotions.

No matter how firmly the titles connect the motives to geographical sites, they all end up in an emotional story. Vivid impressions lose their impact as soon as they have been put in the memory chamber.

**Abstract painting**

Objects are not expelled from abstract painting. They might serve as the source of inspiration, be the long road taken to end up in an abstract motif or be the envisioned parts, supposed to constitute the object itself. In the last two instances, there is a risk that the grey, everyday gaze fools itself into seeing nothing where there is something of vital importance to be seen.

Abstract forms might be disintegrated. With solid outlines corroded, the gaze finds itself entangled in escaping forms only obeying their own incomprehensible order. That is what the gaze is offered to continue the story of the lost self. But, it must move around unbiased.

On the other hand, abstract forms might be rigid, granite-hard geometrical forms. The outlines are cut with the broad-axe of straightness. Truth is spelled out as cube, cone and sphere. Some have claimed that these are the letters to use if reality should be deciphered. Human language is seen as incapable of reaching the underlying reality.
In her latest works, Toni Hanzon-Kurrasch has been painting alongside this sliding scale of disintegrated and geometrical abstraction. The cube is used as a constituent element, but never as a rigid utopian form. It is constantly on the verge of disintegrating; therefore a dynamic element, used to create motion over the canvas.

The cube is used in two ways. Firstly, it is specific objects. The extended, vertical rectangle, in paintings like Shanghai, could be deciphered as skyscrapers lying in the arms of the big city, enwrapped in smog. Secondly, it constitutes the disintegrated objects.

The cube often ends up as a colour field where the only outline is the frame or adjacent disintegrated forms. The motives are beguiling, as they resemble slippery impressions locked up in the memory chamber. The dynamic force
in the motives is enhanced when more realistic features (women and stems) appear in the pictorial settings.

Artistic material and arm movements decide what the cube will be like. The width of the brush decides the width of the cube, the brush strokes its length. Layers of paint create the form; first as a caress of the typhoon, but soon as a seductive whisper. When a disintegrated abstraction is used, emotions are brought to bear. That is the reliability of objects, utopian dreams and impressions. Yet, the stubborn humans keep the fruitless attempt of remembering that which once was, but will be no more, going.

Women and stems
Toni Hanzon-Kurrasch’s characteristic women appear in three paintings. In two of these, they are fully integrated in a decomposed landscape. In Väntan (The Wait), the woman is slowly advancing inside captivating surroundings. Is she led by a desire to escape her past? In Nyfiken (Curious), she is a part of her surroundings. Turned around, with her gaze locked to a black object to the left, she is fettered to her past.

Seen together, these two paintings make the gaze swing to and fro. At one end there is total disappearance, at the other a loophole out of this danger zone spelled a past. The women hold their heads up high. On their lips and in their eyes, a stoic expression is traceable.

Only in Ur skuggan (Out of the Shadow), a distance between the woman and her surroundings has been accentuated. The isolation or the expelling out of her environment suggests an alienated state of mind. The globetrotter has no place to call home. No matter how many laughs are shared with total strangers, the globetrotter is always trapped on the outside.

The word skugga (shadow) could be a way of alluding to a devastatingly dark past or a silvery happy before. It could
Några tankar om ...

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also be a reference to a non-specific geographical place, which offers protection against burning sunrays. A combination of these options works as well. Moving away from something is always carrying on with a fragmented story based on a shattered set of memories.

Stems could be traced in Skymning (Dusk) and Mossa (Moss). The tree-tops are decomposed into heaven. The stems could not be reduced any further. They have taken the place of Atlas. The cube has hardly been used in these two paintings. Here, the total disintegrated abstraction rules. In Mossa (Moss), the gaze is drawn into the picture thanks to the irresistible colour fields. In Skymning (Dusk), the colour fields invite the gaze to a stroll in deep grass, alongside shrubberies and a beach before it safely ends up under the treetops. With the gaze firmly secured in the stems, the rest of the impressions can be arranged into a story that will last until the journey starts all over again.

There is a strikingly sharp contrast between the stems and the skyscrapers. Impressions collected in the big city are under constant pressure from the ongoing changes of the city. Fragile impress-
ions from previous visits will be distorted and shattered when they are put under pressure from new impressions. Trees are connected to earth through their root systems. What will be found in the clump of trees? In Mossa (Moss), a warm light promises a safe stroll or disappearance into an uninhabited spot on earth. The darkness in Skymning (Dusk) is another hiding place. Here, only the changes of seasons corrupt the impressions.

**Compositions**

Toni Hanzon-Kurrasch leads the gaze through the paintings by the compositions. Movement is created by how the elements are arranged and interconnect with each other. Vertical and diagonal compositions dominate. Cubes might be arranged on top of each other. Vertical piles soon disintegrate into colour fields where the gaze stares into the great wide open, the continuation. The piles create a seductive sense of stability. But, the risk of collapse is always near. Some motives have a wilder composition. Here, the underlying threat is created by abrupt endings.

Toni Hanzon-Kurrasch makes use of a layer-upon-layer-technique. This technique gives the forms nuances and lustre. It also generates dimensionality. The result is mesmerizing, grand stories of a past that never was, but became the story of a life.

Balance is of vital importance to Toni Hanzon-Kurrasch. This is attained by the arrangements of forms and the interplay between forms and colours. The motives are held together by the use of a limited palette. The colours are softened to give a calm expression. Underneath this seductive surface loom darker colours, just as skeleton hands are heard knocking on the closet door when you least expect it.

In some paintings, a much rougher combination of strong colours is used. In China, a traumatized state of mind is the result of using roaring red, wild white, boring brown and bullet hard black. Red splashes in Dans (Dance) and Glädje (Joy) looks like fresh bullet holes. An innocent memory is no safer than this.
The letter-less writing
Besides forms and colours, Toni Hanzon-Kurrasch makes use of a third element. With the tip of the brush she has created flowing lines across the canvases. The lines become a letter-less writing. There is a major difference between the forms and the carved lines. The former are integrated into the compositions by arrangement. The letter-less writing is completely wild; it breaks through the layers of paint and forms, only to disappear underneath them again. Sometimes it is the uppermost layer on the canvas, becoming a hollowed out element. The letter-less writing only offers one way of reading: the backward reading.

How are the layers arranged? What has been overwritten, the letter-less writing or the colour fields and forms? What is partly hidden? Do they even belong together? What has managed to break through the concealing surface? The juxtaposition of the layers evolves into a distance between the storyteller and the story told. One thing is certain: when the juxtaposition of the impressions becomes clear, emotions guide the words into place and turn the story of the self into something previously unforeseen.

In applying an abstract painting style, Toni Hanzon-Kurrasch puts the finger on how difficult it is to arrange fragile impressions kept in a memory into a coherent life story. With a staggering number of impressions collected on several occasions from different geographical places, they all get blurred when they are put together. Only their emotional content stands the test of telling.

The story of a life is nothing more than a loose combination of altered and contaminated impressions. The letter-less writing extends this uncertainty by offering no specific, and therefore, any plausible sound and word to use when telling this changeable story. There is the opening to tell a story of the past in
a way that corresponds to how it should have been. The stroll down memory lane is shaky enough to let the tongue loose and spell out that story.

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