

On Isak Hall

Swedish artist Isak Hall purposefully lingers under the surface—choosing obscurity over blasé familiarity. Politics are not of highest importance—with the exception that his work be simultaneously granted access to the regal lair alongside a dear friend's private quarters. It could be observed: there remains something absolutist about Hall's oeuvre—as if his creations only wish to mark deserving territories deemed fit. The artist does not identify with the latest trend waiting to be lassoed, consumed and quickly expunged; instead, his work harbors a timeless air, aiming to withstand the trials and tribulations of some volatile era.

Hall works in silence, in slight opposition to those drowning in arbitrary noise as they diligently chip away at ambitions. His work stands alone or, in contrast, co-exists as part of a more involved series, where steadfast images careen between evolving amorphous landscapes and exquisite figurative gestures. Soft light and the particularity of texture are just as significant as the dramatic contour of a natural panorama. Memories of an extended solo trek up North—or even more remote coordinates, off the grid—may be triggered by Hall's terrestrial sites. In other instances, his more versatile, atmospheric works illuminate the celestial and stellar—embracing vagueness as precipitant for relief. The words of William Blake resonate: “Energy is eternal delight.”

The artist ignites poetic scenes which serve as portals into the subconscious; these same scenes invite others to embrace solitude and mindfulness as they can be applied to a schizophrenic matrix of distraction. Certain works uphold a Neo-Gothic quality—appealing to those nocturnally driven by doom, sporadic fits of despair or revenge. Hall upholds an appreciation for intricacy: crepuscular light can be seen from a distance, peaking through clouds, dissolving boundaries. Globular masses hover—shimmering in defense of the abysmal and oceanic. Diligence and repetition are chosen over flippant spontaneity and informality; instead, the artist cultivates a graceful sentiment which can only be obtained via loyalty to one dominant trajectory at a time.

Influenced by select Renaissance scenes of Hieronymus Bosch and the luminous Post-Impressionism of August Strindberg, Hall further explores correlative symbolism. Spirituality, in whatever form it takes, and our quest for the profound are continuous and mutually desired. One may turn to nature in times of personal turbulence—a constant ally when surrounded by foes or stormy circumstance. One may aspire to transcend and actualize a seemingly unattainable utopia, whilst another seeks to rappel (perhaps, being a skilled climber or risk-taker) from extreme heights through a hidden passage into an undisturbed cave sequestered below cliffs. Instead of fighting, one may flee unwanted disturbance; Hall's work amply serves as opiate for egoistic escapism or necessary introspection. The Buddhists believe that respect for life depends upon an interpenetrating network of wild systems. Getting lost is a feral ritual, but *staying* lost remains underrated.

—*Jacquelyn Davis*

Chariots of copper and of silver—
Prows of silver and of steel—
Thresh the foam,—
Upheave the stumps and brambles.
The currents of the heath,
And the enormous ruts of the ebb,
Flow circularly toward the east,
Toward the pillars of the forest,—
Toward the boles of the jetty,
Against whose edge whirlwinds of light collide.
—“Marine,” *Arthur Rimbaud*