

Roger von Reybekiel: “Untitled” Solo Show

Skånes Konstförening, Bragegatan 15, Malmö, Sweden (November 12-December 11, 2016)

“[...] Art is the only truth, and everything else is a lie.”

—George Condo

When one glances from the floor to the walls of Roger von Reybekiel's “Untitled” exhibition, it is easy to become disoriented. With the floor littered with modernist drawings, walls covered with mixed sculptural-offshoots-as-paintings, the medium is clearly not the message. In an art world where assumptions are quickly made, brashly accepted, and at other times, *unmade* about one's background, disposition or political stance, it is a relief to view an artistic practice which grants an allotted pause for introspection and recalibration—where ideas are not taken for granted. All works are title-less; the artist invites the viewer to create their own titles and, in turn, posit their own meaning. Using everyday materials (i.e., commonplace, pedestrian), perhaps, these works harbor some ambition for universality. If an exhibition could pay homage to Marxist ideologies, where art could be for everyone, with no one left on the sidelines, does von Reybekiel enhance this position? What is the relationship between untitled, unacknowledged, unknown, erased and invisible?

After encountering the diverse thoughts of others on artists and art, one may feel as if they are participating in a slippery game of *Ad-Libs*—with the goal to unearth the best combination of adjectives and references necessary to sway minds, convince one to convert passivity into action, ignite a core emotion with some seemingly harmless combination. Yet, words can fall short when a person, object or situation is transitional. Von Reybekiel does not succumb to convention; he floats on the surface of ranging styles and conflicting methods. From Modernism to the contemporary as it now stands, he exercises the immanent right to uphold untethered freedom with neither justification nor approval. Yet: von Reybekiel takes his eclectic playground seriously; he approaches experimentation from both solo and collaborative angles—with the fluctuating stoicism of a soldier AWOL.

Von Reybekiel's works incorporate fleshy textures and feature an unbridled tendency towards excess; they express the sentiment that the raw and unrefined are pleasurable and to be savored—as if these qualities are more precious than order or precision. As if there is inherent value in the uninterrupted and unconfined—despite paralleled confusion, tragedy or despair. As if to emphasize that the adventurous and spontaneous are ends in-and-of themselves. Instead of illustrating incremental steps towards some well-defined process, the artist thrives best when hovering between and among sound logistics—desiring to reject a default disposition or ineffectual product. As if one prefers to build an evasive, blurred nest—with no silver-tongued explanation or apology due. For with every dogmatic decision, potential can be deferred or lost. Limitation restricts and binds—and not *always* with the intent to liberate (contrary to what Oulipians argue).

A story is usually less intriguing if one is able to predict how it will inevitably unfold. To an extent, this also goes for artists. No one likes a one-trick pony; perhaps, only the most esteemed and/or famous uphold the right to bore others to death or drown them in mundane predictability. Beware of those safely mulling around on a golden plateau; their outlook is often skewed. It took months to determine what I thought about von Reybekiel's work; instead of jumping ship, I chose to remain—in the eye of a tenacious storm—waiting for heavy air to rise, for dust to settle. In this moment, where Postmodern autocrats bait and switch, where old habits die hard, where lies and factoids flutter across my psyche, oddly enough: I now know what I think of von Reybekiel. Critics and appreciators may find the task of unpacking von Reybekiel to be awkward; the artist appears to be both aware of yet unaffected by historical influences, trends and expectations. As if to say: *I know how to please, but I am not eager to do so.* As if to say: *I know the difference between 'normal' and 'ordinary.'* Similar to a wild card which rarely shows its chameleon face in the deck, von Reybekiel appears to be the feral motif in an emerging game which still lacks concrete rules. When it all grows to its fullest form, it will be extreme. Until then: here lies an abstract diversion which doesn't even have a name—archiving the disconnected trickster style which is unavoidably his.

—Jacquelyn Davis