

Mikael Olsson

Mikael Olsson's photographs are in constant sway, oscillating between absence and presence. If themes such as memory, loss, nostalgia, and the passing of time can be considered central to almost all photography, Olsson always adds a feeling of ambivalence that destabilizes the images and gives them a mysterious, enigmatic character.

At the end of the nineties Mikael Olsson created a series of dreamlike images that were definitive in establishing his aesthetics. Although he moved in familiar photographic and geographic territory, his images have an otherworldly, cinematic aura, where reality and fiction seem to merge. The strong, over-exposed light induces a feeling of just having awoken from a dream with the sun burning in one's eyes, dizzy and disoriented.

But there are also muted images of dusk, and interiors with baroque-like contrasts of light and shadow. An empty clothesline in a forest landscape, a half-open suburban window, an evasive portrait—the world has never seemed at once so strange and so familiar. Although the individual motifs are easily recognizable, the linearity is disrupted. Just like life itself the photographs are fragmentary, vague and incoherent.

Mikael Olsson says himself that the motifs of his photographs are, in a way, unimportant but that they form the skeleton that he hangs his pictures up on. Hence they must be interesting enough in themselves to capture the interest of the viewer. If the motifs come with a story there is a better chance that they will live on in the mind.

And it is from this perspective that one should view the photographs in the project *Södrakull Frösakull*, Olsson's portraits of two buildings by the architect and designer Bruno Mathsson. Here the buildings become an excuse for a photographic exploration of spatiality and architecture, but also of memory, transience, and history.

Over a span of six years Olsson documented the seasons and the changing light in Bruno Mathsson's summer house in Frösakull, near Tylösand on Sweden's west coast. In the beginning he approached

the building and its inventory with caution, but gradually he got to know the house and started rearranging the furniture in order to better understand the unique character of the rooms. With these interventions in the space Olsson questions documentary photography's claim on authenticity, instead striving for an aesthetic and emotional truth in his images.

In Södrakull outside Värnamo, Mathsson's permanent home, the conditions were radically different. The house was shut up and in order to portray its rooms Olsson chose to voyeuristically photograph through the cracks in the curtains. The reflections of the exterior landscape in the windows merge with the interiors and create a strange double exposure of inside and outside.

Together the images in this two-part project form an artistic investigation into architecture's formal and visual properties. But there is also a parallel narrative of ageing, death, and decay. A building is so much more than just walls and a roof; it is a living organism that adheres to the same physical laws as us.

Mikael Olsson's vision is razor sharp. He does not look for the decisive moment but the evasive truth, hidden in the cracks between what is pronounced and what remains unsaid.

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