

REVIEWS

conversation focuses on the role and uses of repetition within psycho-analytic practice. Discussing, among other things, *La Chinoise* itself, Rolnik speaks of a desire to break free from the repetition of eternal sameness, while at the same time acknowledging that this “theater of ghosts” provides us with possible narratives, ways of organizing our experience of the world, without which moving forward in life would be impossible.

With the photograph *Untitled (Double)*, Cesarco turned this process of citation back on himself with an image of his studio. At first, the title appears to refer to two pictures of flowers (recalling some of his earlier projects) taped to the wall, or perhaps a couple of stacks of books neatly arranged on the edge of the desk. But compositionally, the work nearly restages his own 2014 photograph *Untitled (Remembered)*, which depicts a slightly wider view of the same work space, with a different arrangement of books and clippings. This subtle bit of auto-appropriation here served as a reminder of the studio as not only a site of inspiration, but also as a place for the practice and the pleasures of repetition.

—Jacob Proctor

Torsten Andersson

GALERIE NORDENHAKE

It's circa 1960, and some people are once again starting to say painting is dead. In its terminal state, the monochrome, it has transformed into an exercise in rendering space and void. But at the same time, in Sweden, Torsten Andersson (1926–2009) is frantically attempting a resuscitation. His painting *Molnen Mellan Oss* (The Clouds Between

Us), 1966, although not on view at Galerie Nordenhake, lent its name to this exhibition, in testimony to the decisive role it played in concluding a period the artist termed his “struggle for language.”

Among the works on display, *Ljuskröna av trä* (Chandelier of Wood), 1980–89, seemed closest in spirit to this effort: It depicts a lumpy canvas with a red form captioned LJUSKRÖNA/TRÄ (chandelier/wood) painted on it, leaning on a dark-blue cube. The background is white, and the two artworks shown in the painting never existed. Such is the language Andersson so struggled to develop: imaginary objects in imaginary space, figurative depictions of abstract shapes. The composition works like an infinity mirror to deflect art's game of

interpretation versus representation back onto itself. Like other artists at the time (Georg Baselitz with his upside-down imagery comes to mind), Andersson collapsed the distinction between abstraction and figuration, but not only that. By choosing sculptures as his primary subject matter, he also called into question the relationship between the flat and the spatial object. When we think back on one of Andersson's paintings, do we not think back on a sculpture?

The question also arises as to whether the content of Andersson's paintings is pure form. Is it more important that we understand what

is pictured to be a sculpture than what, exactly, that sculpture looks like? Andersson's later series of paintings “*Tygskulptur*” (Fabric Sculpture), ca. 2001–2004, and “*Pinnaskulptur*” (Stick Sculpture), ca. 2004–2006, likewise tell us what material these imaginary works are made of. But what about the material of the paintings themselves? Andersson is famous for destroying the vast majority of his own creations, letting only the strongest survive. And those that did had a rough go of it. The canvases in this exhibition look bruised and mis-handled and, in a few cases, were not originally stretched by the artist but have now been mounted to stretched canvases.

Andersson's subjecting his work to a Darwinian survival of the fittest suggests that his struggle to forge a unique painterly language must have been hard-won. And like the children of a tough-love parent, the works have suffered. Light and gestural though they are, they bear traces of their forceful submission to the artist and his medium. This approach risks rendering paintings whose greatest quality is their immediate goofiness unnecessarily claustrophobic. The fictitious artworks were shown not as they really would have been—stringent and economical—but as wonky and idiosyncratic. Stripped of conceptual contrivances, Andersson gives us modern art in a rare, unalienated state. Just as the celebrities in Elizabeth Peyton's portraits can look suddenly like old friends, Minimalist sculptures, under Andersson's brush, appear charmingly insecure. No rescue mission necessary: A painting's a painting's a painting.

—Kristian Vistrup Madsen

COLOGNE

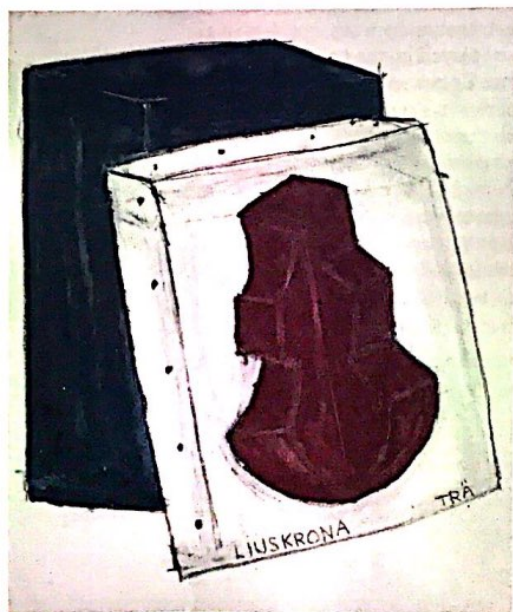
Nil Yalter

MUSEUM LUDWIG

Half a century ago, Nil Yalter broached issues that others dare not touch even today—female genital mutilation, for example. Her video *The Headless Woman or the Belly Dance*, 1974, shows her writing on her body, the text spiraling over her naked belly an excerpt from the French poet and historian René Nelli about the clitoris as the center of female sexual pleasure and the persistent practice of cutting it. Then the artist, a native of Cairo who was raised in Istanbul, performs a belly dance, her marked-up torso epitomizing the contrast between the oppression of female sexuality and the aggressive pursuit of erotic delectation on the part of men.

The Headless Woman was one of Yalter's first videos. Moving to Paris in 1965 at the age of twenty-seven, she started out as an abstract painter. Influenced by the Russian Constructivists, she painted circles that represented the female element. Then, on a visit to Istanbul, she learned of the death sentence against the Marxist-Leninist revolutionary Deniz Gezmiş. Agitated, enraged, she wanted to take a stand, but how? She made a series of five Conceptual abstract drawings. Then she began modifying newspaper clippings and taking photographs of her surroundings. The result, completed in 1972, was the complex installation *Deniz Gezmiş*; in Cologne, it takes up an entire room by itself.

The experience led her to take an interest in outcasts—in the *subaltern*, to use the term popularized by the scholar Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Yalter visited Anatolia's nomads and built a yurt, decorating the outside with drawings on sheepskins and quotations about freedom from the Russian poet Velimir Khlebnikov and the Turkish writer Yaşar Kemal. Among the nomads, women are in command inside the tent but are not allowed to leave it. Their home becomes their prison. This ambivalence is reflected in *Topak Ev* (Round House), 1973, in which the yurt is a symbol of both empowerment and oppression.



Torsten Andersson,
Ljuskröna av trä
(Chandelier of Wood),
1980–89, oil on
canvas, 59 × 51 1/4”.