



Foreword

In a way one could say that this book, where Johan Thurfjell in his own words describe pieces made between the years of 1998 and 2012, is an art piece in its own right. It contains all the reoccurring elements of his work; a combination of different kinds of narratives, a visually compelling form that together with the subtext create a weave and a private story formulated in a general as well as universal guise. The text is strikingly brave because it gives us a view into the private making of the pieces; a process artists normally prefer to keep to themselves, or at least prefer not to share with a wider audience. For it is in the process of making that the »secrets« of the pieces are held. The approach is brave also through Johan's sharing of himself and his experiences in a rather bold and fairly self-exposing manner. At the same time he is maintaining control over the pieces as he is deciding not only what to tell, but also how. Whether the story is real isn't particularly important or relevant, as it is the experienced real that is still standing when the story ends. As described by Johan himself in the book: »When something is described that one haven't personally seen or experienced, an image of it is formed in one's own mind. An image that fill all the criteria of realness, in spite of probably differing from reality a great deal.«

Thoughts are inevitably directed towards the word *inbillning*¹. A word derived from the German *Einbildung* that more accurately translated into

Swedish would have read *in-bildning*². One can easily imagine that *in-bildning* is the process of an image being projected into the brain. A perception is formed from what is seen. Hereabouts is where we find the word *bildning*³. The one possessing knowledge and culture often own a greater power over the telling and retelling of history and the reality that follows. Can anything be known? One thing is for certain; without telling of stories we can't imagine knowing at all.

Assuming that there is a reality, that we live in it and can relate to it through the making of images and the retelling of them in a particular sequence, art in this process hold a special role. Film, literature, theater or visual arts all have the power to *in-bilda* us ways of seeing. An interesting movie, a good book, or a complex piece of art can all make us shift our focus, to »switch channel« and see reality in a slightly different way. The power of storytelling, through the projection of its imaginings, can change reality as we see it.

When Johan in one of his pieces part from a loved one for the last time, he is not only sharing a story. The situation he describes is resonating with something deep within oneself, with a perhaps pushed away and sealed off feeling of once having made the same experience. This feeling is making itself reminded and wants to be heard again. It is sentimental, nostalgic and moving; even slightly embarrassing in a time when a

rational, empirical and more square way of thinking and being is heralded. At the same time that the starting point of Johan's pieces are often very personal no detail to reveal specificity are disclosed. The particularities if the individual event/emotion are separated from the general qualities that create the specific universality, the broad resonance, that allow for most people to identify. Even if one might suspect, speculate or fantasize about what the piece is really about and originate from, there is really nothing concrete revealed, which result in the spectator themselves creating a wider background that really only exist within themselves and not in the piece. The reality of the piece is created by the spectator, that through their own experiences and universe of concepts and believes make understanding and knowledge.

Johan's work spans over a great variety of media; from painting to sound, sculpture, model making, photography and text. Often the visual language interact with a subtext that together with each other make a fairly complex structure; a whole that emerge and may only be read after a while. This structure of telling, that doesn't necessarily follow the rule that after A comes B followed by C and D, generate the kind of dynamic that constitute the force field of the pieces. Johan himself says that he sees his work as metaphors of stories and events. Like »cubes of condensed bouillon where stories have been reined in and cooked down to a piece«. Perhaps it is in an everyday where rationality and empiri-

cism is premiered that we need imaginings the most. Like a cube of bouillon that enhance and add flavor to the dish we imagine calling *life*.

— Power Ekroth
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editor for SITE magazine*

1 The Swedish word *inbillning*, here translated into imagination, suggest a false representation of reality. Inbillning is the false imaginings of the mind.

2 The translation *in-bildning*, perhaps inwards-image or inside-image, would retain the reference to an inner image of the German *Einbildung*, the previous etymological step of the Swedish word, while liberating it from the connotation of falsehood or delusion.

3 The Swedish word *bildning*, meaning education or perhaps even better cultivation as it connotes the refinement of the person, not just in knowledge but in the finer tastes of the learned, is etymologically connected to the word *bild*, or image.