

# Galleri Riis

## FREDRIK SÖDERBERG

*I stepped into an avalanche, It covered up my soul*

New paintings

January 24 – March 2, 2019

We are pleased to announce an exhibition of new paintings by Swedish artist Fredrik Söderberg (b. 1972), his sixth with the gallery.

Söderberg is well known for his intimate and monumental drawings and watercolor paintings on paper; meticulously executed figurative works referencing art history, philosophy and literature, and flowing atmospheric abstractions imbuing spirituality and existential queries. The new abstract paintings in this exhibition are executed with oil paints on canvas, composed from geometrical figures in a subdued palette contrasted with saturated brighter elements. Built slowly layer by layer, they have obtained an intense presence and ethereal sacred beauty, but also a lingering melancholy.

*I stepped into an avalanche, it covered up my soul*

- Leonard Cohen, 1971

It started while I was out walking. I was visiting my childhood home and strolled aimlessly around in what once were familiar surroundings - when it slowly occurred to me that nothing looked like I remembered it. A change of the landscape had taken place almost imperceptibly in the years gone by. To my great dismay, the images of inner landscape - sourced from my subconscious - which I often enjoyed in my dreams, did not any longer correspond with what I saw around me. It made me miserable.

It felt like my dreams had lost something, and it made me think of a text which the writer and philosopher Gaston Bachelard quotes in his book "Water and dreams" from a manual on the art of longevity of life by the Renaissance theologian Leonardus Lessius: "The choleric dreams about fires, war and murders; the melancholic about graves, ghosts, escapes and caves, all sad things; the phlegmatic about lakes, rivers, drowning and shipwrecks; the sanguine about the bird's flight, parties, concerts and things you dare not mention." I could easily associate myself with the dreams of both the choleric and the melancholic. This occurred to me when I arrived at an old pet cemetery I often visited. The place had always given me a kind of pleasant shudder. It is embedded in deep green moss and surrounded by very old and tall pines, and there is something dry and bleached about the nature here. Maybe it's all the buried animals that have drained the ground and made it dull.

One of the paintings in my exhibition depicts a street lamp designed by the Third Reich architect Albert Speer. I wondered if his sinister mind could have designed something that was good or if the lamp would always spread a somber shine and remain in the dark, among the sad things. Next to the cemetery, some of the forest had been cut down and some recently built residential buildings could be seen. It fills me with apprehension that this sign of modernity has penetrated my private dream. I moved on through the forest towards an old sanatorium that still was in use when I was a kid. It is large and castle-like, dressed beautifully in red-pink brick with framed ornaments, but now slightly in decay. It reminded me that I have often used red-pink bricks in my paintings - many of which also have a patina of decay.

There is one figurative painting in the exhibition, it is the first to meet the visitor. The remaining paintings are all abstract compositions without a specific message to convey, but I know it goes back to something I was interested in more than 20 years ago. This has now materialized in the paintings as a ghost from the past.

- Fredrik Söderberg, December 2018