

“The Moderna Exhibition 2010”

MODERNA MUSEET

Skeppsholmen

October 2–January 9

Every four years, the Moderna organizes a group show—the Moderna Exhibition—that provides a panoptic overview of the Swedish contemporary art scene. This is undoubtedly the most important art event in Sweden for local artists and art writers. Every artist wants to be in it and every critic wants to write about it. The previous edition, “When am I?,” which took place in 2006 and was curated by John Peter Nilsson and Magdalena Malm, was an eccentric and humorous affair, featuring Matti Kallioinen, Annika Larsson, Fia-Stina Sandlund, and the Swedish-Romanian enfant terrible Dorinel Marc, who gave away his place to a right-wing nationalist painter.

This year, a curatorial troika spearheaded by Fredrik Liew with Lisa Rosendahl and Gertrud Sandqvist have skipped giving the exhibition a title and a strong curatorial statement, focusing instead on four tendencies they find interesting: “images of Sweden,” “discussions about authorship and narration,” “revisiting modernist formal idioms,” and “the ethereal and spiritual.” The show is sober and temperate, much like the qualities one usually ascribes to middle-class “Swedishness.” The enfants terribles have been swiped away in favor of artists working with time-based practices like “artistic research,” which has become the latest state-funded way of sustaining an art career in Sweden. This “re-intellectualization” of the white cube is enacted in one gallery via desks with computers where one can sit and scroll through artist-written PhDs dissertations.

The strength of the show lies in individual projects, such as Kajsa Dahlberg’s compiling of readers’ comments from hundreds of library copies of Virginia Woolf’s 1929 *A Room of One’s Own*, the YES! Association’s attempts to make Swedish art institutions write an “Equality Agreement,” Lina Selander’s search for her lost father and lost revolutions, Fia Backström’s show-within-a-show about workers and working artists, and Goldin+Senneby’s obscure transactions with secret societies and offshore industries. Even the chimerical worlds of Christine Ödlund, Leif Elggren, and Viktor Rosdahl are must-sees, as is Ann-Sofi Sidén’s four-channel video that shows the artist riding on horseback through the rather uniform Swedish countryside.

— Sinziana Ravini



YES! Association, *(Dis)agreements? – the utility, effectiveness, and problematics of categories, 2010*, still from a color video, 6 minutes.