

ELISABETH FRIEBERG

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Umeå

“However, the painter of the future will be a colorist, such has never yet existed. Manet was working towards it, but as you know the Impressionists have already got a stronger color than Manet. This painter in the future – I can’t imagine him doing the rounds of the local dives, having false teeth and frequenting the Zouave brothel like me.”

Vincent van Gogh (In one of his letters to his brother Theo)

Elisabeth Friberg’s painting work has evolved through many stages, especially through diverse experimental methodologies of painting. She is responding to the leading art historical transformations in her own way of conceptualizing her position as a research-painter. Her *Stagenhisper No 1* (2007) includes some visible forms of her decision-making process such as balancing the composition, creating an abstracted surface, and narrating a fictional harmony etc. in terms of her interest in painting-process. In the painting, the destructed side of the wall and the illusionary perspective from the wallpaper come together, and promise her further experiments in the form of creating new surfaces.

Her recent series of paintings *Untitled (Naten Rand)* have been produced by a focused and introperspective way of reflecting her memories and imagination on the diverse levels of abstraction and colouring. In a way, she is pushing the limits of contemporizing the tradition of landscape painting, especially in the context of *picturesque*. She starts with bringing some figurative motifs of landscapes from her memory, such as the lake Naten, and then abstracting colours from these figures in order to develop grids through the surface of the painting. In order to investigate her conceptualist approach; the term “picturesque” provides a polarity between two aesthetic ideals: “beautiful” and “sublime”. In her own words, “My paintings with lines are combinations of two different pictorial languages: the background, which is both a representative and not representative image the layer of lines, the grid. It is a form of abstraction together with a different manner of abstraction”.

Friberg’s ambition to contemporize some discussion from the history of painting not only opens new channels for developing new techniques, but also repositions the old school traditions, for instance, when bringing back characteristics of Impressionist paintings visible brush strokes, open ended composition structure, the movements of light and shadow (often accentuating the effects of the passage of time), ordinary subject matter, the inclusion of movement as a crucial element of human perception and experience, and unusual visual angles in her recent series. Friberg responds to this introspective process by saying that “there is a movement in the lines as I painted them freely by hand and as a result the meeting with the background became softened. There is also a movement, like a rhythm, which came up through the order I chose to paint the different colours in. The green lines brought out pauses, like holes where you could look down on the lower layer. These pauses also contribute to the layer of lines making them appear rhythmical”. At this point, the paintings become experiments from a colorist, and inspirations for textiles, wallpapers, or design elements about tomorrow.

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