



INTERVIEW  
**CORA HILLEBRAND**

NSFW

# CORA HILLEBRAND GALLERY

CORA HILLEBRAND GALLERY is a Gothenburg based contemporary art platform. Since its inauguration in August 2018, the gallery has exhibited the works of artists such as Fredrik Åkum, Tova Mozard, Daniel Johnston, Alberto Frigo, Tomas Lundgren, Josefine Östberg Olsson, Karin Ström, Martin Solymar, Eva Linder, Erik Betshammar and Kirsti Taylor Bye among others.

\*The following document is our second release in a series of interviews meant to highlight the work of artists, cultural workers and representatives from Institutions and Independent platforms based in Västra Götaland County.



Christer Chytræus—Guds Vrede  
Apr 5, 2019–May 5, 2019

\*Image courtesy Cora Hillebrand Gallery.

**Hi Cora, could you please tell us a little bit about your gallery?**

The name of the gallery is *Cora Hillebrand* and is located in the city of Gothenburg at Fabriksgatan 48.

The venue used to be an artist run gallery but one of the founding members of it had to move so I was asked to take over the lease. The original idea was to have it as a studio/gallery but almost immediately I changed my mind and decided to focus on the gallery initiative.

**You seem to have a busy exhibition program right?**

Indeed. Since its inauguration in August 2018, I have organized 12 exhibitions. That's around one exhibition each month! I'm happy with the positive response from the audience and the artists.

**All of the exhibitions are your own curatorial proposals?**

Yes, but the gallery is open to exhibition proposals and collaborations. Budget-wise, we can only work with local artists at the moment, but the long term goal is to work with international artists and if possible swap exhibitions with other international platforms.

**Why did you decide to focus only on the gallery?**

As an artist, I was frustrated over how gallery and exhibition dynamics work in Sweden. Open calls for exhibitions are scarce and limited, and even if accepted, it can take up to two years before you can have a show.

I decided to address this problem by creating a platform that speeds up the exhibition waiting periods by producing art exhibitions with short time intervals in between. This working method allows me to present up to eight or more exhibitions a year.

**Did you have any previous experience running a gallery?**

Not at all, I had to learn along the way. I must say the commercial aspects of it was an eye-opening experience, you don't just learn about the specifics of sales commission agreements but also get to know the power dynamics between the commercial scene and art professionals.

**I guess it's not a balanced relationship right?**

Not at all. That's one of the reasons I decided to run my initiative as a *hybrid gallery*. I want Cora to succeed commercially but still be administered according to the working ethics of an independent artist-run space.

**Gothenburg is a city well known for its artist-run and self-organized initiatives. These projects have great potential but not all of them have a long life. Any idea why this happens here?**

I think one of the reasons is that neither the commercial or independent scene stand firmly on solid ground. In my opinion, a stable commercial scene here could trigger a stronger self-organized and underground creative opposition, unfortunately the development is not very balanced and ultimately independent projects have to close.





A HEAP OF  
BROKEN IMAGES

BEYOND THE REACH  
OF THE ORIGINAL  
ITSELF

ONE IMPLIES  
A PRESENCE,  
THE OTHER  
AN ABSENCE

SOME SHADE,  
SOME DOUBLE,  
SOME PHANTOM

THE MISREADINGS  
AND THE  
MISREMEMBERINGS

TO BE ECHOING

AN ILLUSORY PAST

BOTH ONE  
AND THE OTHER

OVER THERE

THE ACT  
OF INTERPRETING,  
OF SHOWING,  
OF UNFOLDING,  
OF MANIFESTING

THE TRACE OF  
THE FORMER

TO BE EXHIBITED  
AND PRESERVED

AN INTERPRETIVE  
RECONSTRUCTION  
OF THE PAST

HERE AND THERE

RECONSTRUCTING  
A PAST THROUGH  
EXCAVATING  
FRAGMENTS

THE APPEARANCES  
OF SOMETHING  
THAT WAS ABSENT

THE VISION OF  
THE DOUBLE

TO COLLECT THEM,  
ACCUMULATE THEM,  
MULTIPLY THEM

IN THE SHIFT  
FROM MEDIUM  
TO MEDIUM

REDISCOVERED  
AND RECREATED

THE GHOST OF  
A PRESENCE

THIS CONCEALS  
SOMETHING ELSE

TO MASK AND  
TO REVEAL

Tomas Lundgren-TO BE ECHOING  
Mar 2, 2019-Mar 31, 2019  
\*Image courtesy Cora Hillebrand Gallery.





Tova Mozard & Isak Sundström—We are The Dead (Group exhibition)

Sep 1, 2019–Sep 30, 2018

\*Image courtesy Cora Hillebrand Gallery.

I think both scenes have found it hard to fully flourish here. Maybe it was different and better in the 80s, but could be I'm just romanticizing the past.

**I know from experience that most of the artistic platforms in Gothenburg struggle every month to make ends meet. What about Cora Hillebrand, how sustainable is your initiative?**

So far, it's not sustainable. Without my full time job outside the gallery, I wouldn't be able to run the space. The city has a support system for projects like mine but all the money is used for the project and at the end of the day there is no money left. All the work I do in the gallery is what we call in Sweden *ideellt arbete* (voluntary work).

**You have a full time job and a gallery to take care of, do you have time to produce art?**

Not at all, I had to take a break from my artistic practice.

**You don't see your curatorial work at the gallery as part of your artistic practice?**

My curatorial work at the gallery has had a positive impact on my work process, but I don't see it as part of my practice. I think it's important that artists do curatorial work but in my view, they are two separate things.



Fredrik Åkum—Limbo

Aug 3, 2018–Aug 26, 2018

\*Image courtesy Cora Hillebrand Gallery.

**You have a gallery to run on your own with an ambitious exhibition program plus a full time job, aren't you afraid you'll burn out?**

I'm aware of the consequences but at this point I get such a positive input from the gallery. I think it's worth it.

I do know that the healthy decision would be to bring in a teammate or something. Unfortunately the gallery is not sustainable enough to remunerate another member and I don't like the idea of having unpaid internships... we'll see what happens in the future.

**Can you tell us a little about the neighbourhood where your gallery is located??**

Yes, of course. Gårda is a part of Gothenburg that is fairly close to the city center but sadly enough it has been cut off from the rest of city development in the last decades. The current living situation of many of the residents of Gårda is not optimal. Many of them survive on the lowest pension benefits and lack of access to basic infrastructure services such as running water.

The rent is low but for example, the gallery doesn't have a standard tenancy agreement, we have what is called in Sweden a *rivningskontrakt* (demolition contract), that means that we need to move out of the space the day the landlord decides to demolish the entire building.

**I guess we are expecting the emergence of more generic newly built apartments with over priced rents?**

I don't really know, the future of the neighbourhood is uncertain. The rent situation for most of the tenants is still not clear. Even though landlords have told the residents they want to keep and restore the old buildings, the living standard is still low. I know the current constructions of the Gothenburg subway tunnel combined with a new parking house will affect the area, but we'll see what happens after that. Who knows, maybe the landlords will decide to preserve the buildings for another ten years.

**What's the role of the gallery in this process Gårda is experiencing?**

Gårda has been neglected by the city for so many years and we respect the people who reside in the neighbourhood despite the low living standards. Cora Hillebrand Gallery is an inclusive space that believes art and culture should be accessible and free for all, and it's precisely for that reason that the gallery will keep an open door policy and will never charge entrance fees.

**Even the beers are free right?**

Yes, even the beers are free during the openings.

**You mentioned before the idea of running the initiative as a hybrid gallery. Maybe I will cross the line here, but how are the sales?**

We have some sales, but it could be better.

**I understand. We're all aware that "people of means" in Gothenburg prefer to invest on expensive kitchens and luxury bathrooms instead of art, but what about the audience? Is the attendance to the gallery events satisfactory?**

Yes. The turnout at the openings is always positive and the visits during the exhibition periods varies show to show but all good. Still, compared to the amount of people living in Gothenburg I think the attendance is not as good as it should be.



Josefine Östberg Olsson-Isak hälsar  
May 10, 2019–Jun 9, 2019

\*Image courtesy Cora Hillebrand Gallery.

**It seems low event attendance is becoming the norm right?**

Indeed, for some reason people are not attending contemporary art exhibitions as they used to do before in this town.

**Any ideas on how we could change that situation?**

One solution could be to integrate more cultural activities in our everyday life. In other parts of the world visiting museums or going to a weekend exhibition with your family is part of a cultural and recreational activity. It's not a big deal if you don't like the artist or the exhibition neither. I think it's more about incorporating cultural activities as a habit in your daily life.

**Last but not least! Any changes you would like to see in the contemporary art scene in Gothenburg?**

Besides what politicians might think the city needs more not less cultural and contemporary art platforms. We have too few creative spaces compared with the amount of skilled and experienced artists and art professionals living here.

**Cora Hillebrand** (b.1985) is a Gothenburg based artist with a master's degree in *Fine Art Photography* from Valand Academy.