

NSFW

ERIK GUSTAFSSON
RYTHM

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Text by Martin Kozlowski

NSFW/SVILOVA

The first time I spoke to Erik I think I approached him in ‘a painter to painter’ kind of way. It was obvious to me that he thinks like a painter — through photography. There’s something very painterly about the intuitive, formal, compositional aspects of Erik’s gestural and abstract pictures. It was through them that I’d experience this kind of accessibility, but also in the rendering of his figurative work.

Great! Real nice, I thought to myself, this is photography that I vibe with. When speaking to Erik and having his process explained to me — it all goes down in the dark room — I went from “great” to being baffled. To have the gestural and abstract works explained to me was one of the most inspiring art-related moments for quite some time. How Erik manipulates the exposure to arrive at the works he presents is astonishing. What’s even more astonishing is that it all happens in the dark. **Imagine that. Darkness.**

How does one produce these extremely well executed works in darkness? How does one orient oneself in darkness? I can only imagine tumbling around trying to find my way throughout the process of developing images in the darkroom. Never mind something I would like to show the world outside of the darkroom. Erik once told me he got lost in his darkroom space when he wasn’t wearing any shoes, funny I thought... yet it makes sense. There’s a different sound walking when being barefoot than from walking around in shoes. And there is a bigger difference to be there in the quiet darkness irl than to read the comparison in text here and now. Imagine a place being completely quiet and dark all you have is sound, smell, temperature, touch. Your senses activate. This is where sound starts to play a fundamental role in Erik’s process. Can you see where this is going?

Darkness. Sound. Rhythm. Process.

Sound-memory, how accurate can it be? And how precise can one estimate movement, speed through space and time of exposition?

Moreover, how can one orient oneself within this framework?

— bam bam bam bap, bam bap, bam bap, bam bap, huf tsap, clack then repeat—

Repeat it for yourself. Can you feel it? Can you construct the space in your head and body from the sound? You have to know your darkroom well to get to this point of rhythm. Meaning you really have to be there, work there, fail there, elevate there, experiment there, examine all there is to examine in the darkroom to get to this point of rhythm. This is where sound informs muscle-memory, muscle-memory informs the rhythm and this is when you really start to know your shit. Your way around is to get what you do done. Erik is persistent, through rhythm in the dark and it sure shows in the bright gallery lights.

Martin Kozlowski

ABOUT THE WRITER

Martin Kozlowski (b.1984) lives and works in Stockholm and has his BFA from Goldsmiths and his MFA från Städelschule (under prof. Amy Sillman/Monika Baer). He is a visual artist who predominantly works with painting and has previously exhibited at Galerie Wilma Tolksdorf, Anna Bohman Gallery, and Kunst & Denker Contemporary among other

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Erik Gustafsson (b. 1987) is a photographer and printmaker based in Gothenburg, Sweden. He holds an MFA from the Valand Academy in Gothenburg. Recent solo exhibitions include Steinsland Berliner, Stockholm (2020), MELK galleri, Oslo (2019) and 3:e Våningen, Gothenburg (2019).

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