
4. IT IS DIFFICULT TO LOVE WHAT YOU UNDERSTAND

The most common advice the art world offers is: Buy what you like. That is a lousy advice. If you buy only what pleases your eye, you may end up with a boring collection. Great art is, as we know, great art, and everything else is just everything else. Great art is often startling, uncomfortable and complicated. I enjoyed a good cowboy by Prince or a delectable painting by Sergej Jensen immediately, but it took me several weeks to enjoy Klara Lidén, months to understand Tauba Auerbach and years to comprehend Trisha Donnelly. The contemporary art world is dominated by comfortable art, so it was a relief to discover that I could live with works by Jensen, Lidén, Auerbach and Donnelly. Looking at them reminds me that great art always offers new dimensions to explore, new poles to discover.

Still, I am perplexed as to why, at 7 p.m. on April 5, 2002, Trisha Donnelly, costumed like some Napoleonic messenger, rode a white horse into Casey Kaplan's 14th Street gallery. The tiny crowd stood agog as she read a decree of surrender on behalf of Napoleon that ended with the following statement: "The emperor has fallen and he rests his weight upon your mind and mine, and with this I am electric. I am electric."

Come to think about it—it worked—the entire art world has been wondering what she has been up to ever since.

Spend time trying to understand the complexities behind every challenging piece of art you encounter, but don't expect to comprehend them all: It is impossible. Hans Ullrich Obrist, one of the world's leading curators, is always on the hunt for the next new thing. His favorite question is, "Do you have any unfinished or unrealized projects?" I guess everybody has and I am fascinated by Obrist's attitude. I doubt even he truly understands everything Donnelly is up to, but he sure loves her work.

A lot of art appeared strange the first time it was exhibited, and I mean strange in a Baudelairean way: "The beautiful is always strange...it always contains a touch of strangeness, of simple, unpremeditated and unconscious strangeness." So you need to constantly try staying ahead of yourself, too. Take risks and gamble on having a wonderful future with an art piece that is new, strange and incomprehensible. I almost follow the same rule of thumb as we did walking to the poles, summiting Everest: Think ahead, travel light and leave your fears behind.

Franz West has been a favorite of mine for years. In 2008 he posed in front of his Rolls Royce with a *passtücke* placed where the Roll Royce hood ornament is traditionally mounted. I immediately fell in love with the sculpture and got in touch with Bärbel Grässlin, his gallerist in Frankfurt. The piece was



Matias Faldbakken
Fashioned by Slavery [Oslo v#09] (2012)
Indian ink on /framed lightjet print
(on Fuji Chrystal archival grade paper)
160 x 118 cm

Photo: Ina Hagen