

Deleuzian Gothic

Maya Eizin Öijer and Andréhn-Schiptjenko celebrate thirty years together with a killer show about death.

By [Frans Josef Petersson](#) 17.10.22 [Review](#) [Artikel på svenska](#)



Maya Eizin Öijer, *Nyx Opium Hourglass*, acrylic on canvas, 200 x 200 cm, 2022.


It has been ten years since Maya Eizin Öijer, last appeared at Andréhn-Schiptjenko in Stockholm. But rather than use her comeback to present new work, she has put together a small retrospective spanning from 1990 to 2022. Yet, this is no mere clearance sale. Eizin Öijer has been working with the gallery since the early 1990s, and the show, although not explicitly stated, comes across as a celebration of this thirty-year collaboration.

Et in Arcadia Ego: Works 1990–2022

Maya Eizin Öijer

Andréhn-Schiptjenko, Stockholm

6 October — 13 November 2022

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Founded in 1991, Andréhn-Schiptjenko was instrumental to shaping contemporary art in Sweden during the 1990s. Later, while other galleries from the same generation fell by the wayside, it continued to press on. In the 21st century, it has featured artists such as Annika von Hausswolff, Annika Larsson, and Cajsa von Zeipel, as well as Eizin Öijer, who is one of the gallery's signature names and one of the few it has held on to.

Yet, Eizin Öijer is no typical 1990s artist. Her graphic style, with glossy surfaces and black and red contrasts, is more emblematic of the 1980s, the decade in which she had her first solo shows in Stockholm. Furthermore, her cultural roots go back to the city's underground scene of the 1970s. Back then, the experimental spirit of the 1960s lived on through alternative venues and journals such as Vesuvius, Kulturmagasinet Vargen, and Livestock Riot, to name a few. These might be more or less forgotten today, but they laid the foundations for the DIY culture of the 1980s, which influenced the Nordic miracle of the 1990s. The rest, as they say, is history.

I think the reason Eizin Öijer is still showing with one of Stockholm's most high-profile galleries is that she has merged these countercultural roots into her own bizarre aesthetic which she has held on to with remarkable consistency. Like the goth Wes Anderson of the Swedish art world, her work has a habitual precision that can only come from years of practice.

Yet, it is hard to imagine anything more antiquated than the Romantic notion of aesthetics as the only way to endure a world that can never meet the needs of the soul. Today, it is rather politics that is regarded as all-encompassing, which, ironically, seems to have robbed it of any potential for real change and turned it into an aesthetic object, a subject of art.



Maya Eizin Öijer, *Revenge*, acrylic on canvas, 200 x 140 cm, 2018; *Eruption*, acrylic on canvas, 200 x 140 cm, 2018; *The Heart is Basically...*, silkscreen on acrylic glass, 63 x 48 cm, 1992; *Juliet Drinking Poison*, silkscreen printed silk fabric, 222 x 93 cm, 1991. Installation view, Andréhn-Schiptjenko.

But the point is not that Eizin Öijer is out of touch with politics, but that the show's pairing of older and new works highlights a certain anachronism inherent to her work. More specifically, it consists of one new work – the two-meter-wide square painting *Nyx Opium Hourglass* (2022) – which has been placed last in a sequence of works that can be divided into two groups: three large-scale abstract paintings from 2018, and six works from the 1990s based on appropriated imagery executed in silkscreen on fabric or glass. The walls have been divided into five chapters using artist's signature colors: black, red, and now also pink, like the painting from 2022.

The result can be described as a virtual space where fragments and visual echoes both anticipate and reflect each other, a kind of diagram of external relations that are combined and recombined. In terms of the fashionable philosophers of the day, she is probably more Deleuzian than Derridean or Baudrillardian. That is, her work is not about interrogating how art is trapped in its own hall of mirrors, but rather about reconstructing its ability to

speaking, as concretely as possible, about the physical world: the concrete reality that exerts an influence on us independently of our descriptions and seeps through or penetrates any attempt to control or systematise it.



Maya Eizin Öijer, *The Nightmare*, acrylic on panel, 111 x 186 cm, 1996.

The show starts with a wallpaper printed in a zigzag pattern, another one of Eizin Öijer's trademarks. The zigzag returns in the paintings *Revenge* and *Eruption* (both 2018). The latter consists of red rays violently shooting upwards and/or black spikes pointing down. In

the former, this motif recurs several times; the resulting image looks to be constructed of sound rather than visual impressions. These are concrete paintings which do what they show: they scream, oppose, erupt, and so on. Perhaps they are about the #MeToo movement, which was raging at the time they were painted?

Such a reading would not be unfounded since eroticism, violence, and sexual abuse are recurring subjects in her work. I only need to direct my gaze to the right to see that she addresses the theme in a work based on Jean-Honoré Fragonard's *The Swing* (ca. 1767), showing a man pushing a woman on a swing while another man peers up her skirt. In Eizin Öijer's work, the painting has been cropped, enlarged, and printed on glass.



Maya Eizin Öijer, *The Swing*, silkscreen on acrylic glass, 193 x 128 cm, 1990.

Beside *The Swing* (1990) hangs a smaller ‘altarpiece’ in which two motifs, love and death, meet at the tip of a red “V”, reminding me that Eizin Öijer always juxtaposes visual elements as if playing a game of ‘Deleuzian’ folds. Just so, below the frolicking noblewoman, an X-ray image of a heart seen from above is folded into the picture next to a diagram of the same motif seen from the side and accompanied by a deadpan text: “The heart is basically a hollow muscular organ weighing approximately 300 gm...”

Even though *The Swing* is a complex semiotic system, we don’t need to be erudite scholars to comprehend it. On the contrary, like all Eizin Öijer’s work, it attacks the viewer’s nervous system, as the artist Francis Bacon famously put it. But again, it’s ambiguity she’s after. *Et in Arcadia Ego*, as the show is titled. Death is also in paradise; we can’t have the one without the other. Her work is never finalised, selfsame or comforting. It is always in the “both-and,” as the postmodern art critic Lars O Ericsson has noted.



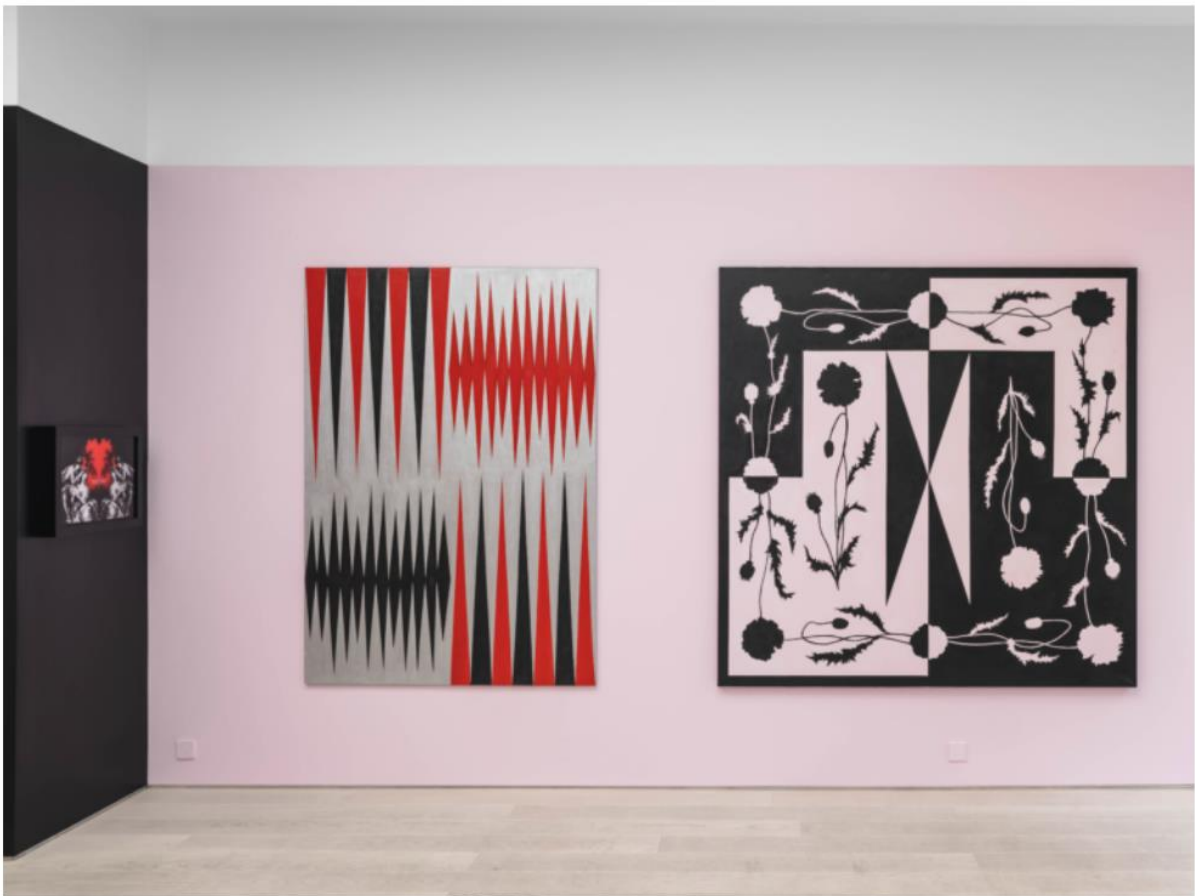
Maya Eizin Öijer, *Venus - Vanitas*, silkscreen on acrylic glass, 37 x 84 cm, 1992.

As I turn my eyes back to *Eruption*, I realise that the painting is not simply what it does, but also something else: a frozen progression or even a point-by-point graph of the pendulum motion in *The Swing*. Movement and counter movement. Assault, retaliation, revenge, and then back again.

Eizin Öijer’s new – and somewhat Hilma af Klintian – painting is an almost symmetrical composition with black silhouettes of poppy flowers against a pink background. The title invokes both time (the hourglass), intoxication (opium), and the Greek goddess of the night (Nyx). But why pink? The colour, of course, belongs to the Rococo and to kitsch, to which the artist has often returned to in her work. But even though the show might end on a

lighter note, we can be sure that death is lurking around the corner. Nyx, as we know, was the mother of Thanatos, the god of death. And out of that death will spring new vegetation, new intoxication, and new hallucinations.

The years covered by the show have seen women come to the fore of the art world, and Eizin-Öijer's collaboration with Andréhn-Schiptjenko has been at the core of this cultural shift. Admittedly, the aesthetics of "both-and" could be used to downplay solidarity, yet the return of essentialist thinking in the era of populist politics makes her work all the more valid.




Installation view, Andréhn-Schiptjenko.

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