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A Swedish Artist Takes an Ominous Look Inside the Dollhouse

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16 HOURS AGO

Alongside the oil paintings she's best known for—small-scale and richly detailed glimpses of domestic scenes—the Swedish artist [Lena Johansson](#) shows a dollhouse at her [new exhibition](#) at Stockholm's [Andréhn-Schiptjenko](#).

The three-dimensional miniature world is a fitting extension of Johansson's work, especially when you consider the history of the dollhouse. Though today they are generally relegated to the sphere of children's toys and mainstream arts and crafts superstores, dollhouses form part of a fascinating artistic tradition. In their 17th-century heyday, the finest dollhouses were crafted in Nuremberg or Paris, and not intended for children at all, but for royal palaces and homesick brides. They were formal and idealized miniature versions of real houses, complete with exact copies of furniture, carpets, china, porcelain, paintings, even tiny wine bottles filled with real wine.

Such painstaking attention to detail, and interest in a home's interiors, is characteristic of Johansson's work. There's wine, too, and lots of it, in the stylish and somewhat unsettling afternoon kitchen scene of *Interiör 1* (2015). Like the other paintings from this particular series—a bedroom scene (*Interiör 2* (2015)) and a dining room scene (*Interiör 3* (2015))—the figures and settings are strikingly fashionable and attractive. And yet, despite tailored clothing and glamorous haircuts, mod design, and sun shining through the windows, there's a sense of foreboding that what you're looking in on isn't actually yours to glimpse.

Not all of Johansson's paintings show such an idealized



Lena Johansson
Interiör 1, 2015
Andréhn-Schiptjenko

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Lena Johansson
Utan titel, 2015
Andréhn-Schiptjenko

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world. *Flicka framför vit gardin* (2015) and *Andy* (2012) portray, respectively, a bored-looking teenage girl and a tattooed young man, leaning against a fence, covering his face with his hand. This range of human pain, from boredom to restlessness to anguish, shows through more clearly in her less-than-perfect subjects and settings. It's only in the polished and surreal dollhouse-like world that authentic feeling is obscured.

Perhaps the most intriguing piece in the exhibition, then, is *Leken* (2015), in which a blonde child looks through the window of a dollhouse, where a miniature woman sits at a table, a miniature child sits on a bed, and a miniature man stands outside at the grill. It's an idealistic scene, but it's not clear whether smiles have been painted onto the tiny faces—or what the real-life child, looking in from above, is thinking.

—[Bridget Gleeson](#)

"Transference" is on view at Andréhn-Schiptjenko, Stockholm, Mar. 5–Apr. 18, 2015.

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Lena Johansson
Interiör 2, 2015
Andréhn-Schiptjenko

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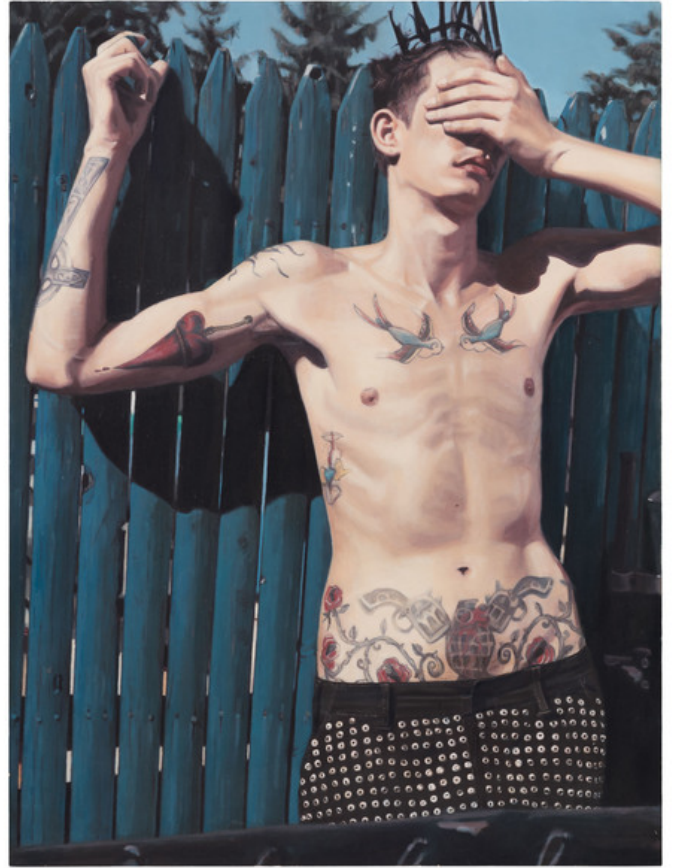
Lena Johansson
Leken, 2015
Andréhn-Schiptjenko

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Lena Johansson
Kojan, 2015
Andréhn-Schiptjenko

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Lena Johansson
Andy, 2012
Andréhn-Schiptjenko

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Lena Johansson
Flicka framför vit gardin, 2015
Andréhn-Schiptjenko

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Lena Johansson
Interiör 3, 2015
Andréhn-Schiptjenko

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Lena Johansson
an framför grönt draperi, 2014
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Lena Johansson
Söndagsmorgon, 2015
Andréhn-Schiptjenko

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