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JACOB DAHLGREN

Born 1970 in Stockholm, Sweden.

Lives and works in Stockholm, Sweden.

Jacob Dahlgren

Jacob Dahlgren was born 1970 in Stockholm where he lives and works. He received his MFA from the Royal College of Art in 1999. He has exhibited widely in institutions such as Copenhagen Contemporary, Museum Ritter, Waldenbuch (2017), MAGASIN - Centre National d'Art Contemporain (2016), KIASMA Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki (2013, 2011 and 2010), Henry Art Gallery, Seattle (2010, 2013), Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona (2010), Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt (2011) and Moderna Museet, Stockholm (2006). In 2007 he represented Sweden at the 52nd Venice Biennale.

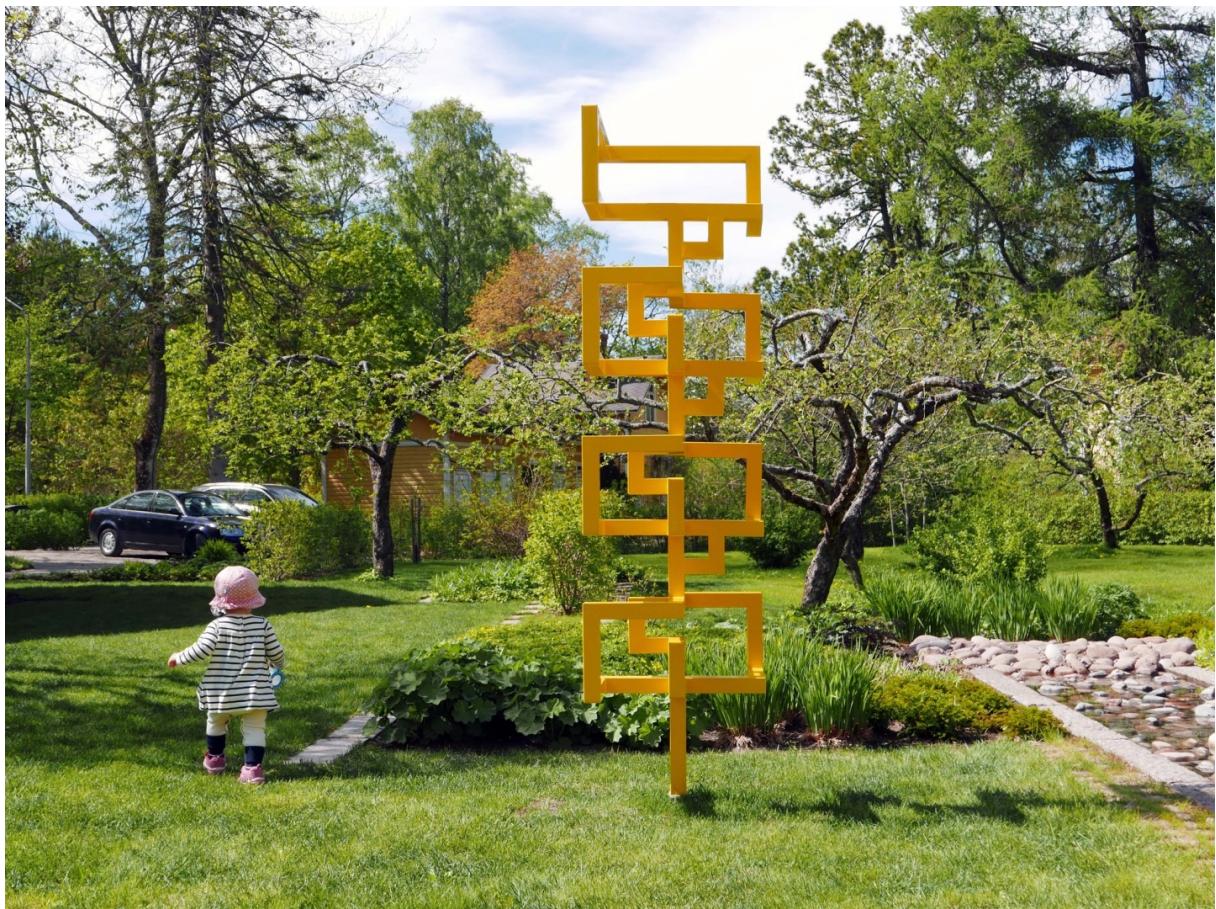
Jacob Dahlgren's work is concerned with a dialogue between the authoritative singularity of pure formal abstraction and its position within a variable, complex and social shared culture. Dahlgren's repetitious collections of ubiquitous and ordinary objects, often domestic, industrially manufactured; stand in their gestalt form as proxy for High Modernist Abstract Painting and for all of the ideological territory that Twentieth Century Art Theory has staked out for it. The contributing objects, however, signify a collective and human aspect of society, each representing an individual choice, to be used or consumed in a unique way by its consumer. Together these objects stand for the group or community, and as such they become democratic rather than authored. This is evident in Dahlgren's social practice - a series of performance events around the world involving local communities - as well as in the large-scale sculptural installations for which he is well known.



Jacob Dahlgren
Early One Morning, Eternity Sculpture, 2019
Painted steel
3,8 x 12,75 x 8,4 meter
Installation view
Public Commission, Helsinki, Finland, 2019



Jacob Dahlgren
Primary Structure, 2017
Painted steel
8,8 x 8 x 2,7 meter
Installation view Astana, Kazakstan, 2017



Jacob Dahlgren
Constructing a new world, 2017
Permanent installation in a private home, Finland



Jacob Dahlgren
Tetris, Konst på hög, 2017
Painted Steel
2 x 2 x 3,6 meter
Installation view Kumla, Sweden, 2017



Jacob Dahlgren
The World as Site and Subject, 2015
Stainless steel
4,5 x 4,5 x 4 meter
Brattorkaia Trondheim, Norway 2015



Jacob Dahlgren

Constructing a New World, 2015

Powder coated Aluminium

Commissioned by the Barkley Company and the Talbot family, 2015

Installation view Barkley Village, Bellingham, USA



Jacob Dahlgren

Horizontal Rectangles and the Awareness of Perfection, 2014

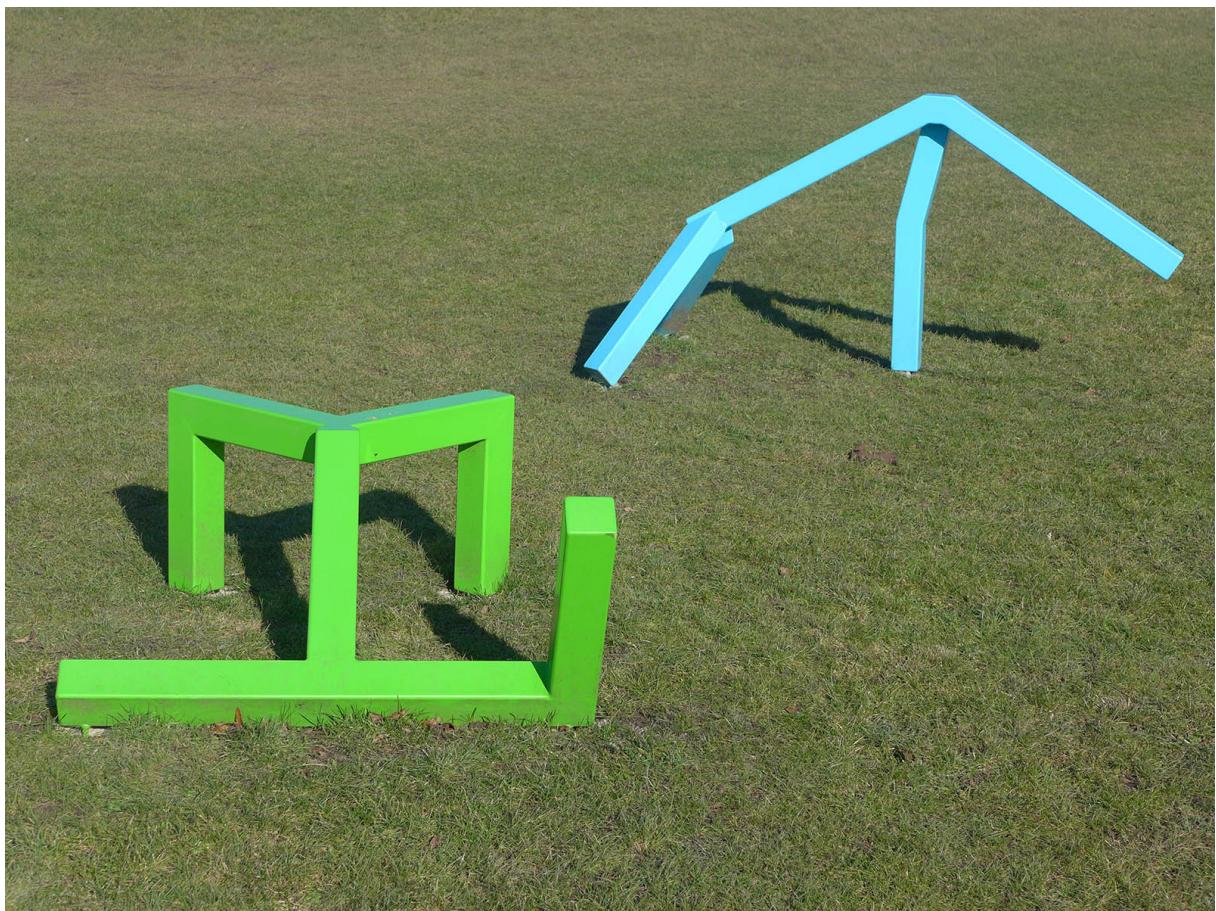
Spraypainted aluminium

5 x 5 x 4 meter

Pilane Heritage Museum, Tjörn, Sweden 2014



Jacob Dahlgren
Self Portrait of Inner Turmoil, 2014
Enamel paint and steel
2,20 x 2,20 meter
Pilane Heritage Museum, Tjörn, Sweden 2014



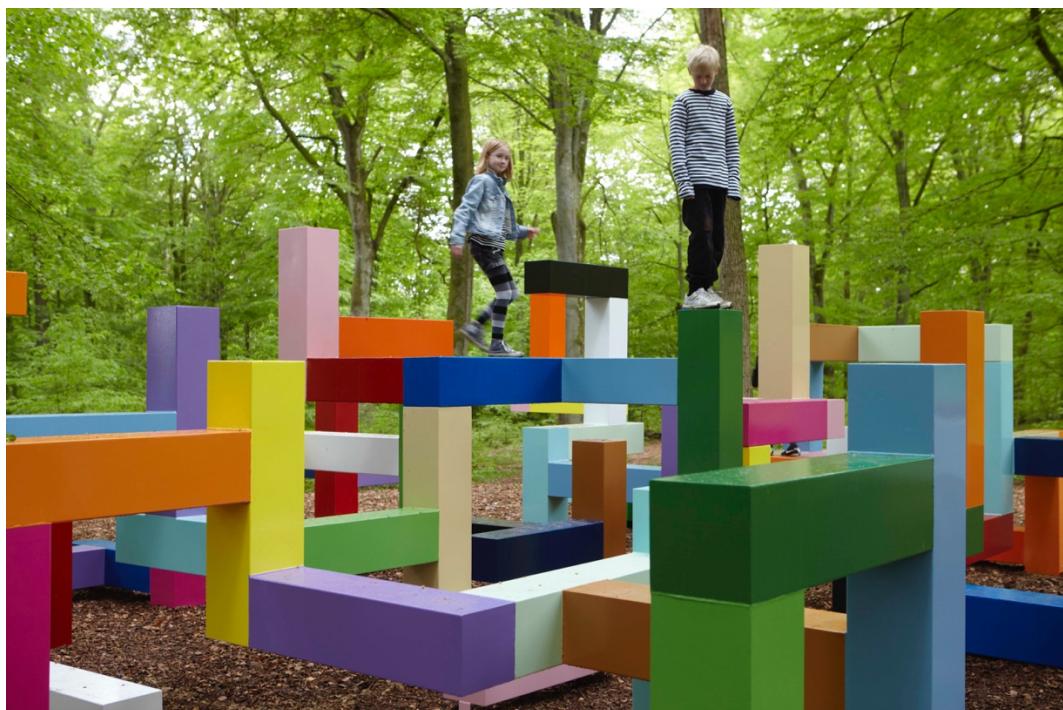
Jacob Dahlgren
Styrka, Snabbhet, Uthållighet, 2012
Painted steel
Slättängens Förskola, Kristianstad, Sweden, 2012



Jacob Dahlgren
Tetris, 2012
Corian
Commissioned by Jönköping Court Building
Jönköping, Sweden, 201



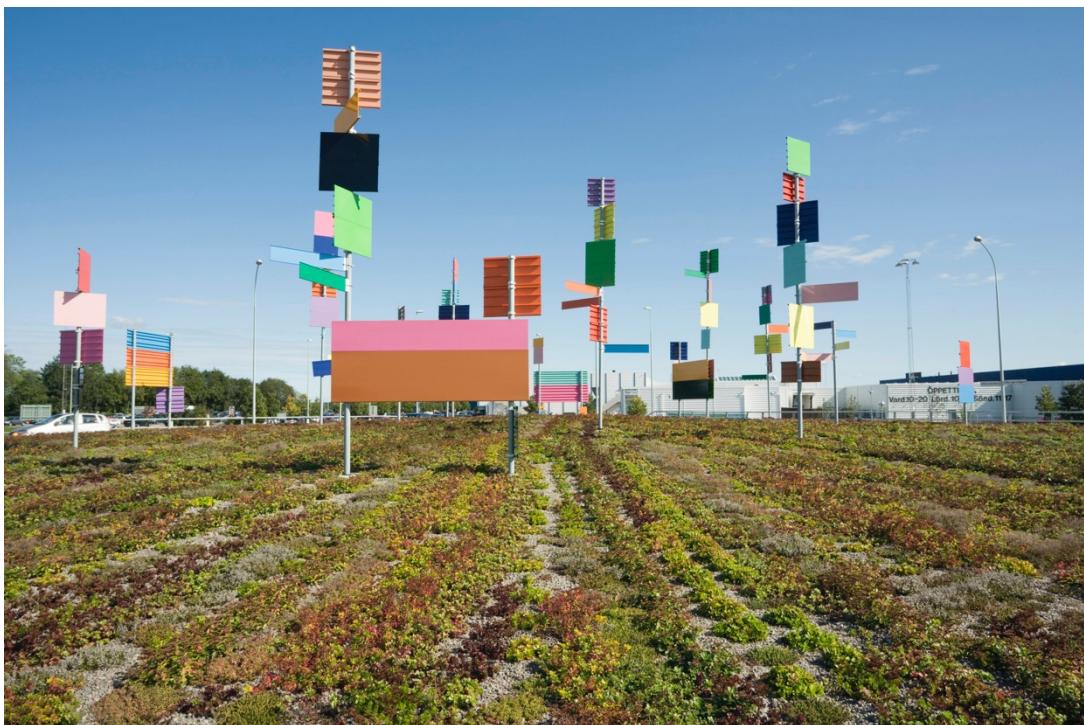
Jacob Dahlgren
Tetris, 2012
Corian
Commissioned by Jönköping Court Building
Jönköping, Sweden, 2012



Jacob Dahlgren
Primary Structure, 2011
Painted steel
10 x 10 x 2,7 meter
Permanent installation at Wanås Foundation
Knisslinge, Sweden, 2011



Jacob Dahlgren
Constructing a New World, 2010
Powder coated steel
3,35 x 4, 25 x 4,5 meter
Installation view
Strandpromenaden, Umeå, Sweden, 2010



Jacob Dahlgren
Abstract, 2005
Spray painted traffic signs
Installation view
Roundabout, Bergsvägen Linköping

October 15, 2017

Jens Asthoff

Minimalism en Masse

Jacob Dahlgren's Sculptural Practice

Since when in fact have Minimalism and abstraction crept into our everyday lives in such an all-embracing manner? So plainly obvious, so comprehensive, and yet so subtle that scarcely anyone notices? Although the latter cannot be said about Jacob Dahlgren. The man is hot on the trail of the phenomenon – and to that end has set up an impressive collection. His target: the striped T-shirt, with the pattern going sideways; a design concept that can be associated with certain currents in abstract art and which the garment industry seems to have in countless variations. As of now, Dahlgren's collection includes 1300 items, and by all accounts the collection is constantly growing.

Even if the very mention of the word "collection" is already part of the staging – because it implies and stirs up images of things that have a sound and solid aesthetic, that are at home in museums, and that are quite assuredly well established – Dahlgren's stock first yields its discursive potential after being linked and bracketed with minimalist pictorial traditions and the formulaic readings these produce. As a logical consequence, the artist has taken the growing accumulation as point of departure for several series of works and participatory projects – as in *Peinture Abstraite* (2013): the title contains a reference to abstract painting, without it being specified in any way with regard to the style or the artists. The work itself consists of a large number of digital prints for which Dahlgren has "painted" each of the stripe designs on his T-shirts per computer. Hung in tight rows, they open up an astonishingly broad field of formal variations which, seen in such numbers, are nevertheless curiously homogeneous: stripes, hoops, lines in every breadth and colour scheme and rhythmic sequence, all arranged horizontally. (ill. *Peinture Abstraite*) Even if one is not quite sure at first what is on show here, already the label "painting" trains our eye in the direction of certain art conventions. Moreover, the title, (ironically?) elevated to posh French, allows the gaze of the expert, or indeed the connoisseur to spot connections that recall the striped paintings of a Bridget Riley or Agnes Martin, of Kenneth Noland, Anselm Reyle, Max Bill or Günter Fruhtrunk – and doubtless one or two others.

The humour of the artistic idea becomes apparent with the realisation that the abstract patterns are not the result of personal pictorial endeavour, nor indeed paraphrases of artistic styles, but are reconstructed T-shirt patterns, second hand compositions, as it were. *Peinture Abstraite* consists of (to date) five boxes each with 250 21.7 × 30 centimetre prints, every one depicting a T-shirt pattern from Dahlgren's holdings.

Generally a large selection of these is put on display at exhibitions, with Dahlgren often including specific contexts in which they are used in the presentation: at Museum Ritter, for

instance, he has put up a selection of 190 prints, which corresponds to the number of days the exhibition lasts (including set up). To the temporal aspect comes a performative one: every day Dahlgren will wear one of the T-shirts whose patterns are on show here, and document this with a photograph. The self portraits that accumulate during the show will be presented one after another on the rear of the wall bearing the Peinture Abstraite prints. So is this a wearable version of Concrete Art? Should mass produced designs à la H&M, Woolworth or C&A compete with modern painting? Clearly Dahlgren's art is steeped in humour and playfulness. Yet Peinture Abstraite and indeed the artist's work as a whole is not simply intended as an exercise in irony or fun. The shift in context brought by the gaze, which here demotes abstract art to what apparently is a mere repertoire of patterns, will always work the other way round. With that the patterns – also sometimes tasteless in the shirt version – reveal themselves as images of surprising beauty, rigour and stringency.

The link between stripey shirts and self portraits also extends into other series of works, such as the “curated” situations: here Dahlgren asks individuals to devise a special set-up that is mostly explored over a number of days, and which he himself realizes and documents in photographs – such as *I Sea* (2016), a scenario which was curated by Solveig Lønseth and carried out on site from 16 to 22 July 2016, including travel to and fro and the daily photos. (ill. *I Sea*) In this instance the piece revolved around a playful mimicry of a sea view, because one stripe on the shirt forms a line with the horizon. Particular mention must be made here of the ongoing project in which Dahlgren poses each day in a different T-shirt from his collection and takes a photograph of himself, thus creating a diary-like sequence of pictures that already stretches back many years (see: peinture-abstraite.tumblr.com). The artist places himself every day in the same pose at the centre of the photo, looking straight at the camera with as little expression as possible. However, the character of the surroundings changes greatly from one picture to the next, sometimes showing Dahlgren indoors, sometimes outdoors, sometimes alone, and sometimes flanked by others – gambolling children, family members, anonymous passers-by, and what presumably are art fans. With an unmistakable “take my photo” look in his eyes, as we all know from private snaps, he seems to stand out curiously from his background. But Dahlgren is thinking big here: while his stripey formations and surroundings have undergone a steady change over the years, the artist remains the constant – and visibly grows older before the viewers' eyes. The ever-identical pose is thus more than helpful and informative, as on some occasion when Dahlgren might make a film-like sequence from the photos – a kind of autobiography in fast forward.

The aspects of accumulation and repetition that determine these stagings of “quotidian abstraction” can be viewed in sum as the main principles in Dahlgren's work. Almost always the artistic form arises from a repeated action or the large-scale use of identical or similar objects. With this Dahlgren often forges links between art and (everyday) life: the fact for

instance that the T-shirts are shown in abstraction, but are also of course worn, becomes a completely different statement, assumes a quite different quality through the sheer quantity involved and in view of the life-long – which is to say personalised – continuance of the project.

This imbrication of art structure and open-ended action serves in a comparable if, in formal terms, completely different way as the factor behind *I, the World, Things, Life* (2004/2017). This work, which was shown at the Venice Biennale in 2007 and now appears newly staged at Museum Ritter, consists on the one hand of a wall-filling array of dartboards: a total of 312 pieces with concentric black and white circular stripes, all tightly packed on the wall in a strict vertical and horizontal pattern. (ill. *I, the World, Things, Life*) At the same time, the piece also consists of the game itself. The wide-ranging Op Art pattern that arises from the serial arrangement is brought to life by the element of action it elicits. And as with the stripey T-shirts, whose use – wearing them – introduces a vital agency to the work, here throwing darts completes the artistic form. Dahlgren has once again worked the idea of the *objet trouvé* through to its logical conclusion: each board is sold complete with six darts, which is why the number of red and blue darts set out for the users is exactly 1872. Over the course of the exhibition, the roughly five by ten metre large wall picture will gradually be covered in splashes of red and blue, a kind of action painting by other means. Thus Dahlgren allows the strict regularity of the initial structure to converge precisely with a kind of chance drawing – as two contrary figures of accumulation. As such, *I, the World, Things, Life* is literally an open artwork: through audience participation, an unforeseeable, individual, and in fact unclosable openness emerges from the work. And what about the likewise open, philosophically far-ranging title? As Dahlgren says, it simply entered his mind before he even set to work on the piece. Be that as it may, it nevertheless seems like a universal phrase for a typically Dahlgrenian entanglement of thing and person in living action.

In some pieces, though, Dahlgren also employs everyday objects in an abstractive pictorial manner, without drawing the viewer into the formative process. As in *Unit of Measurement* (2017). (ill. *Unit of Measurement*) Yet even this work has a hidden subjective element when we find that our perceptions suddenly swivel around: the parallel, horizontal, uni- or poly-chrome stripes appear on first sight to be a minimalist wall piece that structures the space. This kind of work, as Dahlgren has said about an earlier but similar construction, “has an Agnes Martin-like presence, in both colour and grid-pattern”. But as we draw closer is it clear that the artist has nailed a number of standard folding rulers to the wall at regular intervals. Once again it is solely the means of accumulation and repetition by which Dahlgren has generated this minimalist visual pattern. Numbers and millimetre lines mutate to become an abstract drawing, the slight bump on the slender hinges forms a serial relief, while the overall execution modifies the impression of space. Admittedly a bit of ironic-cum-purist legerdemain was involved, for he has made an exhibit of the very thing that is needed to measure and

position pictures and sculptures at an exhibition. Even aligning the works in the Unit of Measurement series is scarcely conceivable without the help of a yardstick – which probably delights Dahlgren as a humorous comment on minimalist self-referentiality. The regular, coloured stripes, “composed” according to colour gradients, act very much like the striped T-shirts as minimalist mimicry in which everyday object and art expectations rub up against each other.

Dahlgren has re-invented this modification-by-accumulation time and again using other objects, such as rip saws in Endless Cut (2011), or coat hangers in Porto 1968 (2011). For Subject of Art (2017), unpainted wooden pencils were sown to different lengths at their blunt end, and placed upright on a square base so that the points of the (various length) pencils form geometrically structured reliefs. Glued together in compact blocks, the now a-functional drawing implements are presented as wall pieces. (ill. Subject of Art)

That the original purpose of such utility items is still recognisable, although they have demonstratively (and wittily) been robbed of their use, marks a strong visual line of argument in Dahlgren’s works – unlike say Peinture Abstraite and I, the World, Things, Life, which are based on particular aspects of their use or on active audience participation. It is noticeable that often with such reassessments of an object’s meaning, Dahlgren has taken items that are used as tools for preparing exhibitions. In this way the self-referential recourse typical of Minimalism to the basic conditions of exhibiting (one’s own) works is given an ironic and practical note.

It all comes down to looking at everyday life with the eyes of a Minimalist, and using this productively in art. A good example is Dahlgren’s video Non Object (2013): the roughly 90 minute film shown as a loop is a both radical and humorous re-adjustment of the daily perspective on life by means of art. In formal terms, it is completely in line with classic conceptual works by for instance Vito Acconci or Stanley Brouwn as the camera spontaneously pursues spontaneously chosen passers-by through open municipal territory. (ill. Stills, Non Object) While we look at various people’s backs – anonymity is guaranteed, and none of those involved is aware of their pursuer’s persistence, which only the viewer-made-accomplice senses by proxy. But soon it becomes obvious what exactly these actors all share: every one is wearing a horizontally striped T-shirt! Dahlgren projects an eye schooled by his Peinture Abstraite onto the realities of inner urban life. The title Non Object can be taken as a reference to traditional Minimal Art à la Donald Judd or Carl Andre – for ultimately it was concerned with developing the classic notion of sculpture into space-related objects which focus not so much on the originality of their own make-up, but rather on assuming an active relationship to the architectural (and social) setting. His gaze steeped in this metier, Dahlgren set out into the pedestrian precincts. While Non Object, filmed with a shaky hand-held camera, is almost a caricature of a Minimal Art statement, it strictly adheres to the self-imposed concept of tracking down the compositional schemata of abstract stripes

in the “fashionable” day-to-day world of his contemporaries. With characteristic humour, Dahlgren liberates Minimalism from the deadly seriousness of the museum: “The colour this season is abstraction” – a marvellously absurd gesture that re-interprets the usual streetscape as a mobile exhibition in public space. The playful reversal of the gaze, projecting the patterns from art into a pragmatic everyday world – contains a grain of the Minimalist mindset that grasps art as spatial-aesthetic argumentation. Dahlgren takes this impulse beyond the pure museum context and with that playfully embroils art in concrete life worlds.

3 January, 2015

The Wonderful World of Jacob Dahlgren by Rebecca Gordon Nesbitt

Since Warhol immortalised the packaging of everyday life, from Brillo boxes to Campbell's cans, new products cannot be launched without an intimate consideration of the means by which they are presented. Nowadays, one can only imagine the teams of people dedicated to the shapes of bottles for mineral waters and perfumes or the metallic exoskeleton of mobile phones and mini disc players. Packaging is part of a product's all-important brand identity, as vital as its logo.

Against this backdrop, Jacob Dahlgren delights in surfaces without being superficial. In what can only be perceived as a deliberate move away from the high-tech, there is something faintly nostalgic about the objects with which Dahlgren chooses to work. He deals in the patterns and curves that a stack of plastic cups makes and the spirals that form if their handles are turned around. Dahlgren evokes a childhood fascination with brightly coloured objects, charting a journey of time spent with mother, from the cotton reels of the haberdashery department to the clothes pegs of the washing line and back to the towers of Stickle Bricks and Lego.

There is ostensibly a relationship between Dahlgren's works and the movement led by Anthony Caro that emerged from London's Saint Martin School of Art in the 1970s in that they function as sculptures that have rejected the plinth and are much more than the sum of their parts. They are a colourful parody of the repeating forms of minimalist sculpture. In his short novel *The Mezzanine* Nicholson Baker describes a lunch hour in which the protagonist observes the minutiae of life, wondering why his two shoelaces have broken within 24 hours of each other and whether the environmental claims made by manufacturer of the hand-drier in his corporate washrooms could be substantiated.

With this in mind and through its visual quality, Dahlgren's work can also be read as painting but, rather than asking the audience to spend time with the painting to determine something about life, Dahlgren has spent time observing the world around him and wants to communicate its components to the viewer. The most impressive painterly example of this is Dahlgren's work entitled *Glamour*, comprised of a shallow metal grid overlaid on a cerise pink wall of varying intensity. The effect is of shimmering beauty that changes its character as the viewer moves around it and the grid intervenes to expose or obscure the colour. When looking at work from a post-conceptual tradition, it is rare that a visceral response is elicited and yet this piece provides the kind of pure visual pleasure that we have come to associate with Barnett Newman. In a world in which we are constantly bombarded by signs and symbols, Jacob Dahlgren's carefully considered aesthetic is able to penetrate the defences of even the most brand-cynical members of the *Wallpaper** generation.

Rebecca Gordon Nesbitt



In the Studio

Jacob Dahlgren

Stockholm, Sweden



»I even wear striped T-shirts at funerals and weddings.«

Attracted by minimalist tradition, Swedish artist Jacob Dahlgren finds abstraction in everyday objects and often overlooked details of contemporary life, which he employs to create dynamic interactive installations and performances. When arranged, the individual objects lose their intended function and form something completely new. Jacob makes reference to artistic styles of the 20th century such as Constructivism, Minimal Art, Pop Art, and the Op Art movement. An important theme in his work is how art and everyday life are intertwined. We met Jacob in his studio in Stockholm's Södermalm district to talk about his work for the Venice Biennale, his gigantic archive of striped T-shirts, and why he occasionally gets kicked out in supermarkets.

Jacob, it's impossible to avoid "stripes" when talking with you. So we might just as well start with it. Where does your obsession with stripes come from? Why not polka dots or something else?

To start with, I don't really care much about dots. (laughs) My fascination with stripes goes back to my time at art school, where I did a lot of Constructivist paintings. Without really noticing, I kept coming back to paintings composed of color fields. I tried out all kinds of colors and compositions, until I realized that I was getting a bit fed up with it. Which was when a friend told me "You know what, Jacob, you look like one of your paintings." And it was true, because I loved to wear these striped T-shirts from the 1980s. After that I looked at my paintings differently. The T-shirt was a kind of continuation, outside the painting, which I found much more interesting. The painting itself became less important.

So that's when you started looking at your shirts as pieces of art of their own?

Yes, by wearing one of my T-shirts I, or my shirt, would become the painting. So I started acting out more in the public space, away from exhibition spaces. Just as one assembles different paintings to create an exhibition I wore fourteen different T-shirts for fourteen days, taking off one each day, to create a performative exhibition. On day one I had to take my kids to kindergarten wearing fourteen T-shirts on top of each other, which got me a lot of strange looks by other parents. (laughs) The next step was to invite other people to create exhibitions by letting them browse through my archive of T-shirts and decide which I would wear next. This was before social media. I just asked people I came across in my daily life, anyone from the parents of my kids' kindergarten to the director of a museum.

You are now running an Instagram and Pinterest feed with you wearing a different shirt in each picture. Is this a continuation of this earlier shirts exhibition you were just talking about?

Yes, one could say that the original exhibition has turned into a social media performance. The feed on my website updates itself every day. All pictures are cropped exactly the same format, so it's really nice when you put them together and flick through them.

You look a bit grim on these pictures... Is this intended?

I try to always look the same in all the pictures. Usually I look a bit unhappy, true, but I decided to put away all emotions, so that the focus remains on the alternating T-shirts. That way, the world is changing, and I am in the middle, just getting older.

You must own hundreds of T-shirts, if not thousands. How do you stack or store them?

I have 1,247 striped T-shirts at the moment, archived in my second studio. It's actually more like a warehouse than a studio. All shirts are packed in boxes, ten in each box. And new ones are arriving all the time! I number and label them. On the label it says where I bought the shirt, what I paid for it, and so on.

And all of them are striped?

Of course!

Where do you buy them?

Everywhere. Sometimes people send them to me. Whenever I travel I try to find some new ones. I never buy online though. I don't follow any fashion trends. I buy the ugly ones, too. In the beginning I was even buying women's T-shirts as well.

Have you ever worn a collar shirt in your life? Would a striped collar shirt even be an option?

No, not since 2001. I even wear striped T-shirts at funerals and weddings.



You have two kids. What are they saying about you wearing only striped shirts?

For a long time they thought it was really cool. And they used to be very proud of me, bragging to their friends about their dad. But at seven and nine my girls are now at an age where they are actually being ashamed of me I think. (laughs)

Have you completely left painting nowadays?

Oh no, I am still painting – in a way. But I very rarely use paint. At the moment I really enjoy working with untreated MDF boards. For this piece here I carved out an indentation, which works as a duct for 4-meter-long cable to form a pattern, a drawing if you will. Attached to the painting is a cable reel. You may plug the cable into a power socket and connect monitors to the painting. You may also connect it with another painting. So, rather than paint I have moved to making my paintings using objects. You know, I am quite interested in Minimalism and the Minimalist tradition. But it is important to me to make a connection to our daily lives. So I try to pair up Minimalism with objects of day-to-day use. This way, anything can be transformed into a minimal object.

And these objects are not tools to produce your work. They actually become the work?

Yes, I've always been interested in devices and tools to actually enter the work, rather than just being tools in the creation process. So, instead of using pencils for drawing, I would use the pencils as the material for the picture. I mean, a pencil is a pencil, but when you put multiple pencils together and organize them in a certain way, they become something else. I suppose I have an obsession with categorizing and organizing things.

Where do you find objects to produce new works?

You know, I can get really excited when I enter a supermarket, because everything in there could become the material for a new painting. It's the same as stepping into an artist supply store and looking at a shelf with paint tubes. Sometimes I even make a sculpture in the supermarket. I put it up somewhere there and leave it there. It's perfect for trying things out and to see people's reactions. Sometimes you get kicked out of course...

Really? But what are you doing that they kick you out? Is it more than just stacking some tins on top of each other?

Well, I am kind of reorganizing their shop. I've gone quite far sometimes...

Did the supermarket staff ever recognize who you are, and that it was an artistic act of yours? Or were they just seeing somebody vandalizing the store?

Just someone vandalizing the store. (laughs) In other cases no one says anything and store customers take items from it and, gradually, the sculpture disappears. I find it really interesting when people get involved in the work in different ways, when an interactive moment sets in.

So you really like your surrounding interact with your work?

Yes, absolutely. Sometimes I even let other people take the lead in the creation process, rather than letting them respond to the work. For example, for ten years I have been following people with a camera in different cities. Whenever I see someone with a striped T-shirt I follow the person until I get noticed, or until he or she goes somewhere where I cannot follow. What I like about it is that you are diverted from your own route. Sometimes I end up in a neighborhood I really am not supposed to be in. It's a bit like stepping onto forbidden terrain. It's perhaps comparable to the excitement of spraying a graffiti on a wall hoping to not get caught.



To someone to whom interaction between the viewer and the work itself is so important, has the internet given you new opportunities to stage such moments of interaction?

Yes, for sure. I use Instagram. It's a perfect platform to continue my T-shirt project. I invite people to curate shows which use my T-shirt collection. They can choose from my digital database of archived T-shirts for a period of time, put a title for the show and write a short text. I post that together with the images of myself wearing the selected T-shirts.

In 2007, you represented Sweden with an interactive installation as part of a group show in the Nordic Pavilion at the Venice Biennale. Did this event impact your career as an artist?

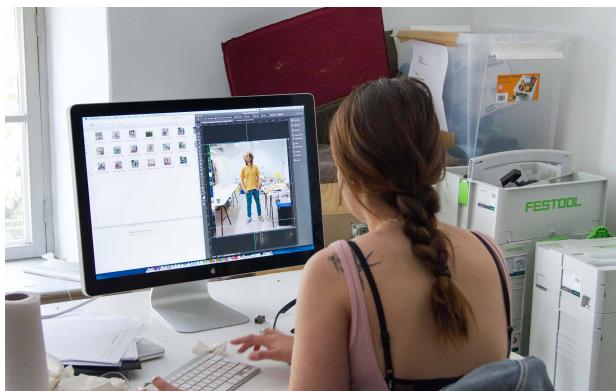
Yes, it was an installation of concentric circles on a wall forming a psychedelic pattern, an allusion to Bridget Riley as well as Jasper Johns's and Kenneth Noland's "target paintings". Visitors were able to play darts with the wall, so it was a very interactive experience. Venice felt like a big party to me. It was a really good experience. Venice is very influential in terms of getting the word out. But I think the bigger change for me was three or four years earlier, when I started doing more interactive work, rather than sculptures and objects.

One of your best-known works is a sculpture of colored steel beams, reminiscent of Tetris blocks, which is installed in a forest in Southern Sweden.

Oh, I think you mean *Primary Structure* in the Sculpture Park of the [Wanås Foundation](#) in Northeastern Skåne. It's a beautiful estate including a castle in medieval Danish style, an organic milk farm, forests, pastures, and farmland. The Sculpture Park is open all year round. Every year, Nordic and international artists are invited to create art in the park, which is then shown between May and October. Many installations are site-specific and stay permanently. Wanås Konst acquired *Primary Structure* in 2011. It consists of 104 parts in eighteen colors. I enjoy seeing children climbing the installation, or even adults stepping inside it, because it is the interaction between body and object that I am interested in.

Talking about art institutions, do you actually like it when curators talk about and interpret your work, or would you rather like to explain it yourself?

I actually like it when viewers assume that role by themselves, because sometimes people come up with very bright ideas I didn't even think about. Most of the time, I can't really talk well about my own work. It depends. However, if I am in the right mood and really start talking about my work it can actually be exciting. What's important to me personally is to show people how art and everyday life are intertwined.



We would be interested to hear from you as an insider to the Swedish art scene, whether you see any topics or concepts that could be considered as "typical" for Swedish art?

I don't know whether there is such a thing as typical "Swedish art." If at all, I would refer to it as "art from the Nordic region." People are traveling so much these days, including artists of course. Inspiration and impressions from different places spread really fast nowadays. So national specifics are dissolving. But there is one quality, which I consider really typical for Swedes. We are generally very good in discovering and adopting things from different places, and turning them into something new. For example, Sweden does not really invent fashion, but it points the way for what becomes trendy throughout Europe. In Finland there has been a very strong traditional Constructivist art movement, which spread to Sweden. Olle Baertling was a very important figurehead of Swedish Constructivism. He died in the early 1980s, but he still influences contemporary artists. I am a big admirer of his work. I was lucky to buy a piece a long time ago. Today his work is pretty much out of reach for most people.

Talking of the impact artists can make on others, do you think there is something an artist gives or should be giving to society?

Absolutely. I think it's really important for artists to open people's eyes, to show them the beauty in our daily lives, or to point out political issues. It needs someone, in addition to journalists or TV shows, to make people think and look at things differently. I think that is a super important task for artists.

How is it for your two kids to grow up with a dad who is an artist? Do they understand what you are doing?

I believe they think that I have a proper job, because I leave home and work at regular hours. Time and again I go on business travels or prepare exhibitions. It's kind of normal to them. But I think they get the idea of art. I mean, my kids have been a part of my work during all those years, interacting with my work, and sometimes helping me with it. I remember my daughter Nin looking at a round pink carpet in the toilet of a place we were invited to for a party. She said, "Dad, that is just a round pink carpet, it's not art." I thought that was a pretty smart statement coming from a three-year old. Things just get complicated when they are introduced to art as a subject at school. I think the educational system is not helping children develop an uninhibited sense for art. It is all about limitations and boxes.

What are you working on at the moment?

At the moment I am just about to complete this painting with the cables. It will go to Berlin. I am also working on an exhibition at [Museum Ritter](#), outside Stuttgart. And then I am working on a book entitled From A-Z which will be published by [Garret Publications](#), a new Finish publishing house. It's really fun to get back to where you started, to see that you develop, and that you are still interested in the same things. Generally, I am trying to work more with my hands these days. I've been in front of the computer for too long... You can render perfect computer drawings but I appreciate the limitations and imperfections when creating something by hand.





Text: Michael Wuerges, Florian Langhammer
Photos: Florian Langhammer

Links

- Jacob Dahlgren Website
- Wanås Konst
- Andrehn-Schiptjenko, Stockholm
- Workplace Gallery, London
- Galerie Anhava, Helsinki

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JACOB DAHLGREN

Born 1970 in Stockholm, Sweden.

Lives and works in Stockholm, Sweden.

www.jacobdahlgren.com

Education

1994-99 Kungl. Konsthögskolan (MA), Stockholm, Sweden.

Solo Exhibitions

2020 Stavanger Kunstmuseum, Stavanger, Norway.

2019 *Not and Or*, Andréhn-Schiptjenko, Stockholm.

Art is Life, Copenhagen Contemporary, Copenhagen, Denmark.

2018 *Abstract Space*, Skellefteå Konsthall, Skellefteå, Sweden.

Not and Or, Eskilstuna konstmuseum, Eskilstuna, Sweden.

2017 *Quality Through Quantity*, Museum Ritter, Waldenbuch, Germany.

Jacob Dahlgren och Mari Rantanen, Konsthallen på Falsterbo Strandbad, Falsterbo, Sweden.

2016 *How Lines Moves Beyond Geometry into Space*, Feldbusch Wiesner, Berlin, Germany.

2015 *Fourth dimension/third uncle*, Galerie Anhava, Helsinki, Finland.

Third Uncle, Workplace Gallery, London, United Kingdom.

Kung Fu Panda, Workplace Gallery, Gateshead, United Kingdom.

2014 *Stripes and Coloured Circles*, Stig Fredriksson and Jacob Dahlgren, Art Museum Centre Sinkka, Kervo, Finland.

Jacob Dahlgren and Emily Stremming, Duet, St Louis, USA.

Abstract Space in Concrete Terms, Rua Red South Dublin Arts Centre, Dublin, Ireland.

On Balance, Fabrica, Brighton, United Kingdom.

2013 Andréhn-Schiptjenko, Stockholm, Sweden.

Kristianstads Konsthall, Kristianstad, Sweden.

Kunstraum, London, United Kingdom.

Galleri Mårtensson & Persson, Båstad, Sweden.

Work as Method, project for Austrian Chamber of Labour, Vienna, Austria.

2011 Wanås Foundation, Knisslinge, Sweden.

Units of Measurements, Skärets Konsthall, Nyhamnsläge, Sweden.

Model for Understanding the World, Galleri Andersson/Sandström, Umeå, Sweden.

2010 *The viewer is in the picture*, Passagen, Linköpings Konsthall, Linköping, Sweden.

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- New Abstraction*, Jacob Dahlgren & Johan Löfgren, Gallerie Leger, Malmö, Sweden.
- Jacob Dahlgren/My Ekman*, Konsthallen/Hamnmagasinet i Varberg, Sweden.
- 2009** *Forward, Back, Right, Left*, solo project at Henry Art Gallery, Seattle, USA, curated by Elizabeth Brown.
From Art to Life to Art, Andréhn-Schiptjenko, Stockholm, Sweden.
Sharks, lions and ships, Steven Wolf Gallery, San Francisco, USA.
The wonderful world of abstraction, Galerie Anhava, Helsinki, Finland.
- 2008** *Heaven is a place on earth*, Mayerei, Karlsruhe, Germany.
Prints, Grafikens Hus, Mariefred, Sweden.
- 2007** *Heaven is a place on earth*, Steven Wolf Gallery, San Francisco, USA.
Jacob Dahlgren, Ystad Konstmuseum, Sweden.
General and specific, Augelimumseet, Sala, Sweden.
- 2006** *Galleri Box*, Gothenburg, Sweden.
Early one morning, Galerie Artfinder, Hamburg, Germany.
- 2005** *Jacob Dahlgren & Elly Hemberg*, Kulturhuset, Skövde, Sweden
Malmö Konsthall with Katarina Löfström, Malmö, Sweden
Berlin Art forum, Galerie Artfinder, Germany.
A wither shade of pale, Kunstverein Harburger Bahnhof, Hamburg, Germany.
- 2004** *Lamps and trees*, Galleri Stefan Andersson, Umeå, Sweden.
I, the world, things, life Norrköpings Konstmuseum, Norrköping, Sweden.
Eskilstuna Konstmuseum, Eskilstuna, Sweden.
I, the world, things, life, Galleri Charlotte Lund, Stockholm, Sweden.
- 2003** *The possibility of eternal conceptual misunderstandings* Galerie Anhava, Helsinki, Finland.
Item 1: general constructive will, Galleri Mårtenson/Persson, Påarp, Sweden.
- 2002** *Neither man nor nation can exist without a sublime idea*, Wintergarten kunst im raum, Vienna, Austria.
- 2001** *Third uncle*, Millesgården, Stockholm, Sweden.
Galleri Charlotte Lund, Stockholm, Sweden.
- 2000** *Glamour*, Galleri Maneten, Gothenburg, Sweden.
- 1999** *Jacob Dahlgren with Jonas Nobel*, Galleri Charlotte Lund, Stockholm, Sweden
- 1998** *Galleri Mejan*, Stockholm, Sweden.

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Group Exhibitions (selected)

- 2020** *The Flag Project*, Kunsthalle Göppingen, Germany.
 Mind the Gap! Between Known and Unknown Spaces, Museum für Konkrete Kunst, Ingolstadt Germany.
 Sensory Art, Havremagasinet Länskonsthall Boden, Sweden.
 Still still life, Sara Hildén Art Museum, Tammerfors, Finland.
- 2019** *Mixed Tape*, Gallery Feldbush Wiesner Rudolph, Berlin, Germany.
 Blickachsen 12, Contemporary Sculpture, Bad Homburg and Frankfurt Rhine-Main, Germany.
 Colour Snap, University of Hertfordshire, United Kingdom.
- 2018** *HEIMAT*, The 2018 Guang'an Art Biennale, Guang'an Wusheng Baozhen, China.
 Self Improvement/Personal Enhancement, Vögele Kultur Zentrum, Freienbach, Schweiz.
- 2017** *Aktion & Malerei*, Galerie Stadt Sindelfingen, Sindelfingen, Germany.
 Color Factory, San Francisco, USA.
 Living Collection: Facing the Public, Sara Hildén Art Museum, Tampere, Finland.
- 2016-2017** *The Duchamp Effect - Works From the Daimler Collection*, Kunsthalle Göppingen, Göppingen, Germany.
 Kristianstads Konsthall 15 år!, Kristianstads Konsthall, Kristianstad, Sweden.
- 2016** *Raumwunder*, Museum Ritter, Waldenbuch, Germany.
 Briser la Glace, Magasin – Centre National d'Art Contemporain, Grenoble, France.
 Collected Works! 30 years with Maria Bonnier Dahlin Foundation, Bonniers Konsthall, Stockholm, Sweden.
 Luftslottet, Norrköpings konstmuseum, Norrköping, Sweden.
- 2015** *A Foreign Encounter*, Galerie Foe, Munich, Germany.
 Här och nu, Västerås Konstmuseum, Västerås, Sweden.
 Vern Volume, Biennale d'Art Contemporain de Vern-sur-Seiche, Vern-sur-Seiche, France.
 Eccentric Abstraction, Feldbush/Weisner, Berlin, Germany.
 The Unexpected Guest, Turku Biennial, Aboa Vetus & Ars Nova, Turku, Finland.
 Doma International Art Festival, Sofia, Bulgaria.
- 2014** *SKULPTUR*, Royal British Society of Sculptors, London, United Kingdom.
 Kiasma goes Taidehalli, Helsingin Taidehalli, Helsinki,

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Finland.

Satellite Satellite, Workplace Gallery, London, United Kingdom.

Re: Art, Meken, Smedjebacken, Sweden.

The time for pop art is not over - SuperPop!, Serlachius Museum, Mänttä, Finland.

2013

The ghosts of architecture: recent gifts, praised gifts, and acquisitions Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington, Seattle, USA.

Sleeper, Workplace London, London, United Kingdom.

Ränder, rytm, riktning, Nordiska Museet, Stockholm, Sweden.

13 är ett lyckotal, Gumbostrand Konst&Form, Söderkulla, Finland.

Kiasma's 15th anniversary exhibition, KIASMA Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki, Finland.

Art Across the City, curated by Gordon Dalton, Swansea, United Kingdom.

Game Changer, Collective Gallery, off-site group exhibition, Meadowbank Sports Centre, Edinburgh, United Kingdom.

Surface, The Civic Art Center, Barnsley, United Kingdom.

Double Illums Bolighus, Illums Bolighus, Copenhagen, Denmark.

Baltic Sea Record 2013, Stadtgalerie Kiel, Kiel, Germany.

Ta Plats, Kungsbacka Konsthall, Kungsbacka, Sweden.

2012

Changing Perspectives - 15 years of the ECB's art collection European Central Bank in Frankfurt, Germany.

Marketplace, Division of labour, Worcester, United Kingdom.

Spectral Landscape with viewingstations, Color and Contemporary Art, curated by Pamela Fraser and John Neff, Gallery 400, University of Illinois, Chicago, USA.

Grafik älskar fotografi, Fotografins rum, Kommendanthuset Malmö Museer, Malmö, Sweden.

Woodstock 2012, Växjö Konsthall, Växjö, Sweden

Great outdoors, Pace University, curated by Jillian McDonald, New York, USA

Worlds apart, Galleri Thomas Wallner, Simris, Sweden

Klang och Jubel Skärets Konsthall 2002 - 2012, Skärets Konsthall, Nyhamnsläge, Sweden.

2011

Double, douoble, Workplace Gallery, Gateshead, United Kingdom.

Ta plats!, Karlskrona Konsthall, Karlskrona, Sweden.

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Kind of nice, Galerie Anhava, Helsinki, Finland.

Playing the city 3, curated by Matthias Ulrich Schirn,
Kunsthalle Frankfurt, Germany.

Gallery Artists, Andrae Kaufmann Gallery, Berlin, Germany.
New Productions in the Park - Yoko Ono and Jacob Dahlgren,
Andrae Kauffmann, Berlin, Germany.

2010

For Your Eyes Only, De Markten, Brussels, Belgium.

Murals, Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona, Spain.

Minimalism and Applied II, Daimler Art Collection, Berlin,
Germany.

Ceci n'est pas un Casino, Villa Merkel, Esslingen,
Germany.

Re-make/Re-model, curated by Matthew Hearn, National Glass
Centre, Sutherland, United Kingdom.

*Some Notes on Subliminal Messages and Remarks on Air
Conditioning*, with Marcel Buhler, Cream Contemporary,
Berlin, Germany.

Ceci n'est pas un Casino, Forum D'Art Contemporain,
Luxembourg, curated by Kevin Muhlen and Jo Kox.

It's a Set-up, KIASMA, Museum of Contemporary Art,
Helsinki, Finland.

The economy of the gifts, A Foundation, Liverpool, United
Kingdom, curated by Ticiana Correa.

Ta plats, Kulturhuset, Stockholm, Sweden, curated by P-O
Hagström.

If You Could Collaborate, A Foundation Gallery at Rochelle
School, London, United Kingdom
Umedalen skulptur, Umeå, Sweden.

2009

More than a T-shirt, Bielefelder Kunstverein im Waldhof,
Germany.

Colour Urban Structures, Artfinder, Galerie Mathias
Guntner, Hamburg, Germany.

Flash! - Light and Movement, Sara Hildén Art Museum,
Tampere, Finland.

Hammer and Nail, John Körner, Jacob Dahlgren, Atle Hynne.
TWT, Oslo, Norway.

Engholm Engelhorn Gallery Vienna, Italy.

Från Plats till Plats del II, Skissernas Museum, Lund,
Sweden.

Favoured Nations, Nordic Biennial of Contemporary Art,
Galleri F, Moss, Norway, curated by Stina Högvist and
Lina Dzuverovic.

Superabundant: A celebration of pattern, Turner
Contemporary, Margate, United Kingdom.

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Second Hand, Engholm Engelhorn Gallery, Vienna Austria,
curated by Jasper Sharp.

All Colours Permitted As Long As They Don't Interfere With Business, Museum of Contemporary Art, Szczecin, Poland.

2008 *Image and After*, Museum of Contemporary Art KIASMA,
Helsinki, Finland.

Next Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow, Galerie Hans Mayer,
Dusseldorf, Germany.

Grafikens hus, Gripsholms Kungsladugård, Mariefred,
Sweden.

Borås International Sculpture Festival, Borås Konstmuseum,
Borås, Sweden.

All colours permitted as long as they don't interfere with Business, BWA, Katowice, Poland.

Image and After, Kiasma's 10th Anniversary Collection
Display.

Toronto's third annual Nuit Blanche 2008, Toronto, Canada,
curated by Dave Dyment.

Umedalen skulptur, Umeå, Sweden.

Skulptur i eventyrshaven, Odense, Denmark.

Art For Fun, Casal Sollerí, Mallorca, Spain, curated by
Javier Marroqui and David Arlandis.

2007 *Etc*, Amagerfælledvej Art Project, Copenhagen, Denmark,
curated by Sotiris Kyriacou.

Bellezza Pericolosa, Pan Palazzo delle Arti, Napoli,
Italy, curated by Manon Slome and Julia Draganovic.

Welfare Fare Well, 52nd Venice Biennale, the Nordic
pavilion, Venice, Italy, curated by Rene Block.

Dangerous Beauty, Chelsea Art Museum, curated by Manon
Slome New York, USA.

Den moderna staden - det offentliga rummets estetik
Uppsala Konstmuseum, Uppsala, Sweden.

Lenny Clarhäll, Lars Nyberg, Sofia Hagman, Jacob Dahlgren
Grafikens Hus, Mariefred, Sweden.

Typ Konst, Västerås Konstmuseum, Västerås, Sweden.

Stipendieutställning, Konstakademien, Stockholm, Sweden.

Elli Hemberg & Jacob Dahlgren, Norrtälje konsthall,
Norrtälje, Sweden.

Jacob Dahlgren, Maria Friberg, Andres Serrano, Astrid
Svangren, Galleri Charlotte Lund, Stockholm, Sweden.

2006 *Altered, Stitched and Gathered*, P.S.1 Contemporary Art
Center/MoMA, New York, USA.

Dreamlands Burn, Kunsthalle Budapest, Hungary, curated by
Edith Molnar and Livia Páldi.

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- Art, life & confusion*, October salon, Belgrad, Serbia,
curated by Rene Block.
- Bonniers Konsthall, Stockholm, Sweden.
- Minimal quotation*, Galerie Artfinder, Hamburg, Germany.
- Check in Europé*, EPO, Munich, Germany, curated by Marketta Seppälä/Veronika Wiman.
- Modernautställningen*, Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden.
- Umedalens Skulptur*, Umeå, Sweden.
- Landskap*, Studio 44, Stockholm, Sweden.
- Elli Hemberg & Jacob Dahlgren*, Skövde Konsthall, Skövde, Sweden.
- Reflecting Identities in contemporary Art, European Patent Office, Munich, curated by Fredrik Helander.
- 2005**
- Expanded painting*, Prague biennale 2, Prague, Czech Republic.
- Swedish-Sri Lankan artist*, Harold Pieris Gallery, Colombo, Sri Lanka.
- Signes d'abstraction 3-modiga möten*, Gallerian Stockholm, Sweden.
- Skulptur i Norden, 1980-2005*, Wanås, Sweden.
- Svensk Konst Nu*, Sveriges Allmänna Konstförening, Stockholm, Sweden (touring exhibition Sweden).
- Mostings hus, Copenhagen, Denmark.
- Baltic Raw tower, Hamburg, Germany.
- Union*, Christiansands Kunstforening, Norway.
- Malmö Konsthall with Katarina Löfström, Malmö, Sweden.
- 2004**
- Maleri*, Galleri F 15, Moss, Norway.
- Här står du*, Konstfrämjandet, (touring exhibition Sweden)
- Signs of abstraction*, Black box, Norrköping, Sweden.
- Äntligen hemma*, Bohusläns Museum, Nacka Konsthall, Skövde Konsthall, Sweden.
- 2003**
- Temporary spaces*, Charlottenborg, Copenhagen, Denmark.
- Contemporary Swedish art*, ECB, Frankfurt am Main and Nordic embassy, Berlin Germany.
- Skilling banco*, SAM/Kulturhuset after shopping, Stockholm, Sweden.
- Moviken Art*, Moviken, Sweden.
- Kabusa invited*, Kabusa Konsthall, Ystad, Sweden.
- 2002**
- Talking about time space and stories*, 27th Pontevedrabienal, Spain.
- Greyscale/CMYK*, Tramway, Glasgow, Scotland.
- Umedalen skulptur*, Galleri Stefan Andersson, Umeå, Sweden
- Ars Fennica*, Södra Kareliens konstmuseum, Finland.
- Ars Fennica*, Tavastehus konstmuseum, Finland.

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- 2001** *Sliding down the surface of things*, Life gallery, Stockholm, Sweden.
Vem är rädd för rött, blått och gult, Liljevalchs konsthall, Stockholm, Sweden.
On location, Forsbacka bruk, Gävle, Sweden.
17 up, Galeria Miejska Arsenal, Poznan, Poland.
17 up, Gallerie Manes, Prague, Czech Republic.
- 2000** Baertling/Dahlgren, Grafiska sällskapet, Stockholm, Sweden.
Baltic sea biennal in Kalliningrad, Russia.
Biennale Syd, Sörlandets konstmuseum, Christiansand, Norway.
The flying mouse, Konstnärshuset, Stockholm, Sweden.
Stockholm Art Fair, Sollentuna, Maria Bonnier-Dahlins Stiftelse, Sweden.
Spiller, Växjö Konsthall, Växjö, Sweden.
Grafikfestival, Chong Qing Fine Art Museum, China.
- 1999** 112 års svensk grafik, Grafikens hus, Marieberg, Sweden.
Swedish Contemporary Printmaking, Embassy of Sweden in Tokyo, Japan.
Galleri Charlotte Lund with Jonas Nobell, Stockholm, Sweden.
- 1998** Under-gång, Södersjukhuset, Stockholm, Sweden.
- 1997** Grönt, Konstnärshuset grafikgalleriet, Stockholm, Sweden.
Konstnärshuset with Andreas Eriksson, Stockholm, Sweden.
Stockholm Art Fair, elevutställning, Sollentuna, Sweden.
- 1996** Konstnärshuset Grafikgalleriet, Stockholm, Sweden.
- 1995** Falabiennalen, Dalarnas Museum, Sweden.
- 1994** Avgångsutställning Grafikskolan, Galleri Lars Hagman, Stockholm, Sweden.
- 1992** Grafiktriennalen Liljevalchs Konsthall, Stockholm, Sweden.

Grants and Awards

Konstnärsnämnden, Stockholm, Sweden.

Headlands Center for the Arts, Artist in Residence, San Francisco, USA, 2009.

Carl Milles stipendium, 2008.

Augelistipendiet 2007.

Theertha, artist in residence, Colombo December 2004.

Konstnärsnämnden 2-year working grant 2003-2005.

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Nifca artist in residence, Glasgow June-August 2002.
Konstnärsnämnden 1-year working grant 2001.
Stockholm stads kulturstipendium 2001.
Beartlingstiftelsen 2001.
Stockholms kulturstipendium 2002.
Nominated to Ars Fennica 2002.
Ax:son Johnsons stift 2002, 2000.
Hirsh fond 2001.
BUS 2000.
Gerhard Bonniers stipendium 2000.
Maria Bonnier Dahlins stiftelse 2000.
Assistent stipendium 1999.
Getfotsfonden 1997.
Stiftelsen Gustaf och Ida Unmans donationsfond 1996, 1994.
Anders Sandrews stiftelse 1996.

Commissions

Askerbyskolan, Rinkeby, Sweden, 2004.
Bergsvägen, roundabout Linköping, Sweden, 2005.
Brattörkaia, Trondheim, Norway 2014/15.
Campus Valla, Linköping, Sweden.
Hornstull, Stockholm, Sweden Hurum Komunhus, Norway, 2014.
Kvarteret Bulten, Bonniers Fastigheter, Sweden, 2013.
Kvarteret Vattenfallet, Råcksta, Stockholmshem, Sweden, 2011.
Kungliga Tekniska högskolan, Stockholm, Sweden, 2000.
London Royal Hospital, Whitechapel, Vital Arts, England, 2014.
Skanstullshallen, Stockholm konst, Sweden, 2011.
Slättängens förskola, Kristianstad Kommun, Sweden, 2012.
Sundbybergs Bibliotek, Sweden, 2013.
Swedish Court, Jönköping, Statens Konstråd, Sweden, 2012.
Södersjukhuset, Stockholm, Sweden, 2001.
Volvo Truck Corporation, Gothenburg, Sweden, 2007.
UMAS Hospital, Malmö, Sweden, 2010.

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Public Collections

British museum, London, England.
Chamber of Labour, Vienna, Austria.
Daimler Collection, Stuttgart, Germany.
Eskilstuna Konstmuseum, Eskilstuna, Sweden.
European Central Bank, Frankfurt, Germany.
Göteborgs konstmuseum, Gothenburg, Sweden.
Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington, Seattle, USA.
Kiasma, Helsinki, Finland.
Maria Bonnier-Dahlins stiftelse, Stockholm, Sweden.
Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden.
National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin, Ireland.
Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, Sweden.
Norrköpings Konstmuseum, Norrköping, Sweden.
Saastamoinen stiftelse, Finland.
SAK, Sweden.
Sara Hildén Art Museum, Tampere, Finland.
SEB konstförening, Stockholm, Sweden.
Statens Konstråd, Stockholm, Sweden.
Sundsvalls museum, Sundsvall, Sweden.
Sörmlands museum, Nyköping Sweden.
Uppsala Konstmuseum, Uppsala, Sweden.
Vehbi Koc Vakfi, Istanbul, Turkey.
Västerås konstmuseum, Västerås, Sweden.