

SKETCHBOOK NOTES

Published in the catalogue "Elina Brotherus", i8, Reykjavik and Galerie Anhava, Helsinki, 1999.

24.8.1998, Helsinki

Landscapes and Escapes – When did I think of that name? Sometimes good words can appear even before the first photograph.

What does escaping look like visually? What do I want, or have wanted to escape? Violence, pain, orphanhood, lovelessness. Horror, panic, fear, a bad premonition – they are like bass organ notes under a summer landscape or below the clear tones of children singing.

31.8.1998

Remember light: nothing is more important in a photograph than good light.

20.11.1998

Jan Kaila spoke of the desire to conquer and possess a landscape. I feel that this also applies to portraits: the desire to own the subject/model by a photographer him/herself.

Feminist critique claims that the tradition of landscape photography is 'masculinist' as it is associated with possession. Do women photographers then make different landscape images? Do my landscapes, for instance, differ from those of male photographers?

8.2.1999

In *Landscapes and Escapes I*, the relationship of the figures to surrounding space and to each other is successful. I realised that, by looking into the camera, I became an ally of those who view the photograph, rather than belonging to the group of three in the background.

25.2.1999

Desire; the idea of a picture with K.: his hands on my face; the hands moving on it, covering it, caressing it.

29.3.1999

Discussion with Jorma Puranen, concerning the coming landscape project abroad:

Jorma suggested that I might consider the idea that there is no relationship with the landscape; that I am a stranger, an outsider. He also went on to say that landscape is like a portrait of a place, as it can express invisible attributes, just like a portrait can express someone's personality.

8.4.1999

The picture that I would like to make of K's hands on my face. He might wear gloves. That would give the image an extra level that would be sad and cruel.

15.4.1999

I will make a picture called *The Fundamental Loneliness*. It comes from Jobim's *Wave*, a lyric of which has been playing in my head for days: "The fundamental loneliness goes whenever two can dream a dream together." But I am only speaking of loneliness.

16.4.1999

For breakfast I have the food I prepared for yesterday. The door to the balcony is open. It is raining outside, and the radio is playing jazz. When I tried to eat the melon, I burst into tears. I cry and cry. Even a dog would be good to have. K. is still my muse, but I have gone back to images of the dead of winter.

21.4.1999

I made *Epilogue*. What moved me most was that after shooting a roll of film, I turned to look at K., and he, too, had tears in his eyes.

25.5.1999, St Petersburg, at the Hermitage:

Gauguin's Tahiti paintings are a fine example of how a person places himself in a landscape, their subjects are almost like those in front of a camera, who are in process of becoming aware of the artist. Study them.

Landscapes: a frontal view, from higher than the surroundings leads the eye into depth. The painter Claude Lorrain: low horizon, high sharp trees, enormous sky and clouds, misty light far off in the distance.

19.6.1999, Strasbourg

I spent three hours on the roof terrace of the museum with Paul-Hervé and Philippe, and I got sunburn on my neck. The gentlemen described the intricacies of the art world to me. They must have found it delightful.

20.6. 1999

Take pictures at different times of day, especially in the evening and morning, when it is growing darker or slowly becoming light. Don't forget the night! Don't be afraid of black in an image, and don't be afraid to use a lot of sky.

And remember frontality. The landscape as a plane, with rectangular areas or lines versus: the landscape as a space with a route for the gaze. Or a combination of both, like Matisse's painting, *Conversation*, in which everything is at right angles to the spectator's viewpoint, except the window, which opens a route deep into exterior space.

7.7.1999, Kuohijoki

I lit the fire in the stove, as it was cold last night. Tonight will be even colder. The sky is clear, a light turquoise between the black silhouettes of the birches. I remember, if not exactly, a line of poetry from Proust: "Les arbres sont déjà noirs, le ciel est encore bleu".

I took two rolls of film, making the *I May Be Pregnant* pictures: I stand amidst the birches and the meadowsweets. White trunks, white flowers and white skin shining in the indirect light of the night. There is no wind. The silent birches make me calm. [Later, I decided that I will call this photograph *Landscapes and escapes V.*]

5.8.1999, Helsinki

"The Basic Series", as Timo Kellaranta calls it, is myself in various situations and places, according to what life offers. (It will probably continue in my new environments.) In addition, I could also photograph myself through the world much more: objects, dogs, strong faceless croppings, spaces without people. *Landscapes and Escapes IV* (the Merihaka Tower Blocks) is also necessary because it is completely void of people and its colour is important. Intense yellow, red, green, and blue appear in adjacent images in the series.

29.9.1999, Chalon-sur-Saône

What makes a landscape photograph a work of art? What is the quality, visual or conceptual, that it must contain, in order not to be either a postcard, or a geographical document?

30.9.1999

I collect bridges and beds, methodically but not with the same strict adherence to form as the German photographers, the Bechers.

I think combining self-portraits with landscapes adds something more into both genres. The landscapes become charged with meaning and serenity flows into the self-portraits.

The world is white noise. It is the artist's job to extract meaning from it. Yesterday I thought about what makes a landscape photograph a work of art. Perhaps it's just this, that the photographer has succeeded in framing a significant fragment from the mess of the world.

11. 10. 1999

The idea of escaping is compelling. So I went and bought a ticket to Venice. Let that trip do me good.

13.10.1999, Venice

I am staying on the Lido. It's a relief to be here. Although it is foggy, the pale sun warms the mist. I see the world as if through a white matte glass tinted with yellow.

Life returned to me on the beach. The salty, mild wind and the ceaselessly repeated sound of the waves rolling ashore calmed me. It is easier to breathe when I am moving. I don't know what made me most anxious before: the small town; staying in one place in general; or heartache and disconnectedness. But when travelling, the sense of being disconnected is pleasant, not oppressive. To belong anywhere or nowhere is alright.

17.10.1999, Chalon

I have returned. The fog had condensed almost into rain, as I walked in early morning through Chalon with my suitcase. The crows were crowing.

Now I am filled by a great silence. Because of the honesty and friendliness of another person, I can just sit and look at the water as it drips from the tap every six seconds.

22.10.1999

I have again taken landscape photographs, although I still have not decided why I make them OR their justification in the context of art. Pictures like *Shunting Yards in the Fog*, *Lit Bridge*, *Reflections on the River*, *Sunrise*; they may be damned beautiful, but am I dashing headlong into aestheticism?

24.10.1999

All my new landscapes are empty of people. I haven't found any reason, or desire, to get into my landscapes here in France. I don't belong in them. I guess this is what Jorma has talked about: lack of any relationship with the landscape.

8.12.1999, Aix-en-Provence

The bus to Le Tolonnet, the spot from where we walked for a while and climbed up pine covered hills. The sand was red. I photographed La Montagne Sainte-Victoire located opposite.

5.3.2000, Paris

On Wednesday, in the Metro, I made my choices of works for the exhibition at Galerie Anhava in Helsinki. The landscapes in *Suites Françaises 1* all share symmetry and a deep space.

27.3.2000, Helsinki

Where self-portraits are windows into myself, landscapes are windows opening outward from me. For me their starting point has been predominately visual. I want to show people what, in my opinion, looks fine in the world.

(Translated from Finnish: Jüri Kokkonen.)