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HEM TILL BYN / BACK INTO TOWN

Johan Röing

Opening reception: Friday April 29th 2011 from 5 to 8 p.m.

April 30th through My 28th 2011.

Wednesday – Saturday from noon to 5 p.m. (or by appointment)

The original Swedish title holds a double meaning which cannot be translated. The Swedish word *BYN* means 'town' but it also implies a rural village like the village of *Fuglie* where Röing lives and works. So is Röing coming back to the town of Copenhagen? or is he via his works taking us to Fuglie? From a Danish point of view it could look like the latter is the case. Röing's sculptures come across as extraordinarily Swedish. They are all made out of wood and carved with a chainsaw. It is easy to imagine a kind of Swedish hermit whose only company is his saw and the vast woods. This is, however, not quite the case: Röing received his education as a sculptor in Düsseldorf in the eighties and lived in Germany for more than 25 years. He would most likely rather describe himself as divided between the identity as a Rheinlander and as a Skåning (someone from the Swedish region of Skåne), as opposed to between Germany and Sweden.

To see Röing's sculptures in the light of some imagined Swedish national character would thus probably end up saying more about a dated (Danish) notion of Sweden and the Swedes than it would say about Röing and his works. Still, the works do appear quite foreign in a white gallery space. They clash with the surroundings. This clash could perhaps be found in wood as a material and in the crude way in which it has been sculpted.

For the past hundred years or so sculpture as a medium has, without any great trouble, been able to adapt almost any material to such a degree that anyone with a somewhat trained eye has no trouble understanding that anything from marble to garbage to wrecked cars etc. can be sculptural materials. In this light it is somewhat surprising that crudely carved wood should be so incompatible with the white cube of a gallery and seem so out of place.

Somehow though, the fact that the works comprise so much materiality, time and work sharpens the contrast to the plain white walls of the gallery - and even to the surrounding urban space. The figures contain both nativity as well as a brutality in the surface's dissolving and ornamenting expression. Röing's approach to the sculpture is both experimental and free; the works though also stand out as very thought through and with references to art history and classic sculpture. He is an artist who brings care and presence into his sculptures through his unique expression and work with the materials.

Röing has created new works for the exhibition; these will be combined with earlier works as well as with homemade pieces of furniture.

Johan Röing was born in 1958 in Malmö and today lives and works in the village of Fuglie. As mentioned before he studied sculpture at the academy in Düsseldorf in the 1980ies under Professor Tony Cragg. Röing has since then exhibited extensively in primarily Sweden and Germany.

Sincerely
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