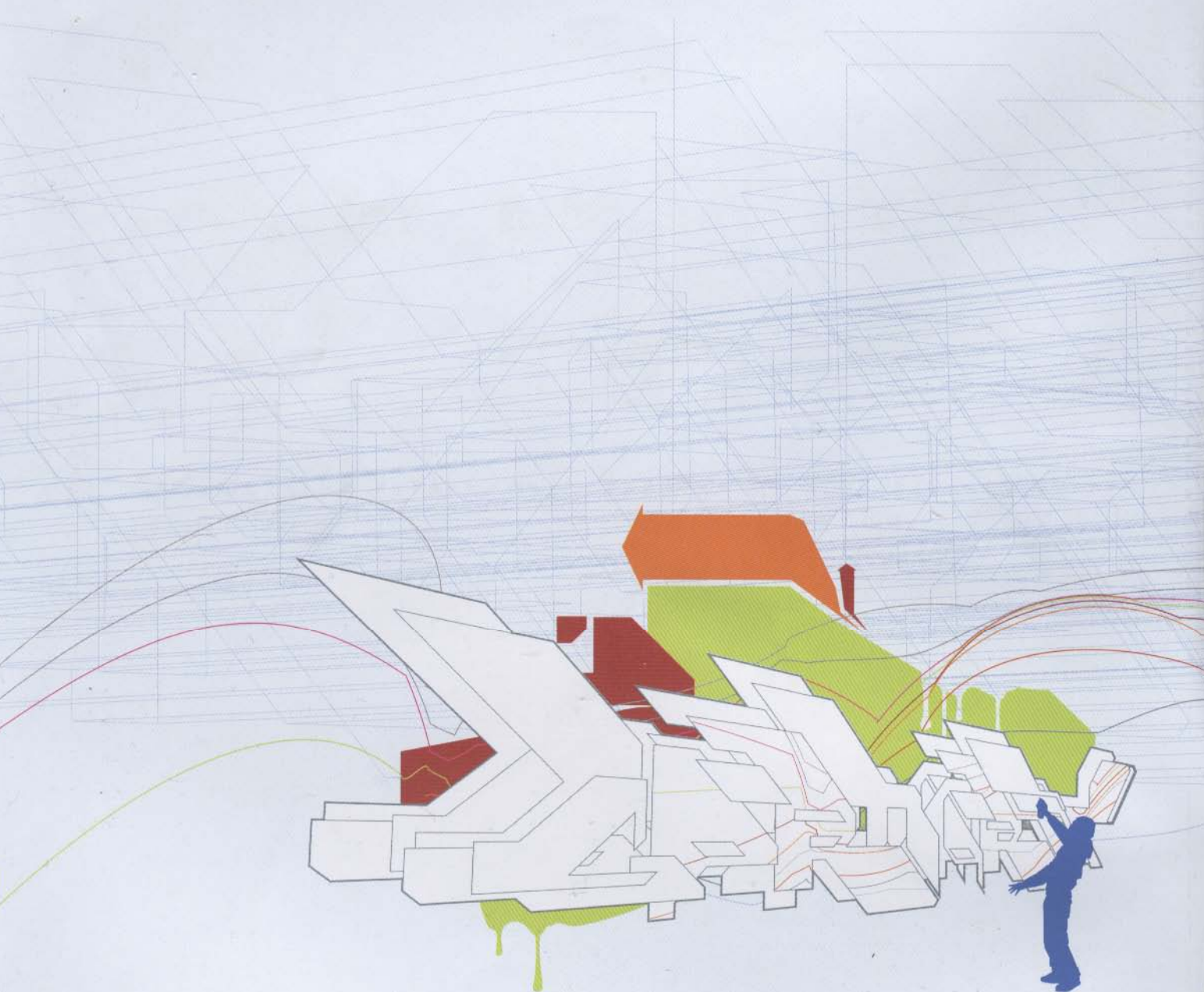




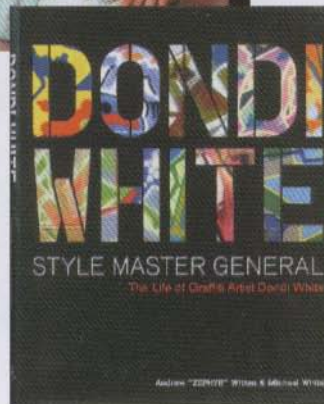
CP vs NG  
Indian Graphics  
Björn Hårdstedt  
The Hip Hop Collector





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**Cover Photo** by Malcolm Jacobson.  
Sneakers in the wardrobe of Jesper  
(page 4-7), November 2001

Välkommen Nina!



## How to get published

1. Send in your photos or texts to:  
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2. Make sure photos are of good quality.
3. If a piece is a part of a wall or train with several pieces - send in all pieces.
4. Don't send the same photos to other magazines.
5. Enclose the following info: text on the piece, who made the piece, when it was done, where it was done and anything other interesting about the piece.
6. If your photos don't get published - please try again!

Photos sent to us will be put into our photo archive and is considered as UP's property. We don't take any responsibility for material forwarded to us.





Jesper in his favorite dress



A mural for a farm outside of Östersund

## "Graffiti – Both destructive and beautiful"

**Oldschool hip-hop is thumping out of the stereo. Jesper, our host, handles the turntables and raps to the tunes between slugs of beer. Instead of talking to each other, we play video games and drink beer.**

Jesper is 29, but his three-room apartment looks more like a teenager's bedroom, full of graffiti sketches, record covers, posters and newspaper cuttings. Only one room suggests how other 29-year old residents of Östersund live: in his dining room, the walls are adorned with children's drawings rather than graffiti pictures. Jesper's two children stay with him every other weekend. The shelves creak with magazines, videos, books, Kangol hats and caps.

–I've heard Dogge (from Swedish rap group Latin Kings) only has thirty caps. That's not so many, is it? says Jesper. Along one wall are shelves of records and some big boxes of marker pens. In the entrance hall are two beer crates containing legal pads filled with tags. Jesper is probably one of UP's most devoted readers, and during the ten-year history of the magazine, we have received several personal letters from him. Now we have gone to Östersund to find out who he is.

After the initial party at Jesper's, we are going to a dance. Jesper is sceptical, but his girlfriend Terese wants to go. Östersund is in the middle of Sweden, on the same latitude as Alaska, and in November the weather is bitter. Jesper does a few backspins be-

fore we slide out onto a path in the woods to go to the dance. Jesper is quiet and morose, having downed a few 7.2s (7.2% proof beer). We walk and speak to Terese, and when Jesper gets left behind, he loses his temper and destroys a bus shelter.

We are surprised by the different aspects of Jesper's character.

– Graffiti is both destructive and beautiful. That's why it'll never really be accepted. For me, it's like a vent: I'm both harmonious and explosive. Some people think I'm crazy when I tell them about things I've done. When I get angry, I am like a steam engine with no brakes. Some people think I'm crazy when I tell them about things I've done.

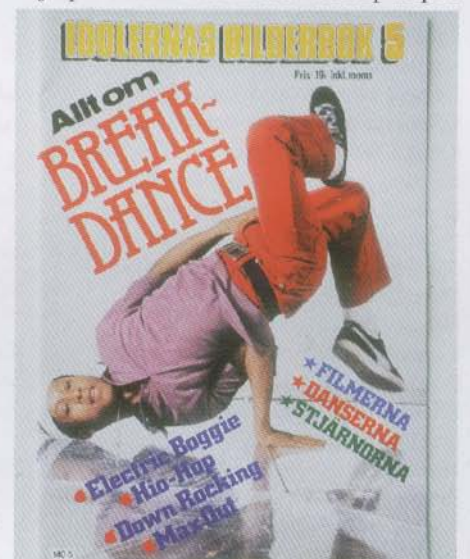
When Jesper was on a school trip in ninth grade, he smashed a room at the hostel. Following that, he had to attend a child psychiatrist. Later he was put in borstal.

A few years ago, Jesper was sentenced to a closed psychiatric unit. He doesn't think he received much help, but rather sees it as an assault. Now he attends therapy on a voluntary basis.

– If you haven't been given your space, graffiti can become a form of revenge against teacher, parents and the society that has let you down and failed to understand you. I'm not going to kiss ass and ask about legal jobs when they've spoiled things for me. I do my thing. If you haven't been allowed to be visible, to get your own space, you do it with graffiti.

Things are really happening at the dance. As we stand checking out the dance floor, we are repeatedly invited to dance by teen-aged girls. Flattered, we try dancing to our best ability. Having failed to learn the fox-trot after a few goes, we stand a bit further away from the dance floor. We had expected a bunch of old ladies and gents, but the average age is about that of a hip-hop club in Stockholm, just with a broader span. This typically Swedish culture feels far more remote and exotic to us than breakdancing, popping and locking. Jesper, who has given his life to hip-hop and sews Bronx patches onto his clothes, is less than amused.

Jesper became fascinated with hip-hop in



All om breakdance (All About Breakdance) 1984





Sketches in Jesper's bedroom

the mid-80s. He started breakdancing at the youth centre around 1984.

– There were loads of crews battling, he says.

He did his first piece in 1985. Lately, he has also devoted himself to rapping and mixing. But that's not all. He has also collected everything to do with hip-hop.

– When I see a hip-hop thing, I think, 'I've got to have that'. The first thing was All About Breakdance, a 1984 magazine.

Before hip-hop, he collected firecrackers. Collecting has been a habit ever since, says Jesper, who sees similarities between his different collections:

– Having a bunch of markers and paint cans is a lot like having a collection of firecrackers: you look forward to blowing it all up. Now I blow it up with letters. I go out at night, and no teacher or boss tells me

what to do. Writing graffiti is like baking yourself a cake, and letting others have a taste.

Jesper tells us about the difficulties in being an active writer in a small town.

– There's no understanding for ghetto culture here. Society doesn't want what you've got to communicate. They don't want to see the pictures, everything is supposed to be clinically clean.

Jesper often feels pressured into adapting to what his environment considers to be normal.

– People think that hip-hop is for 13 or 14-year-olds. But what about us, the ones who started it, then? It doesn't matter how old you get. An artist doesn't stop painting at a given age. Being an artist is a way to escape anguish. Creativity is born out of frustration.

At work or on other occasions when graffiti is discussed, Jesper often tries to get people to understand what it means to him:

– I see myself a bit like a yuppie, but instead of a briefcase I always carry sketches and photos in my backpack, which I take out and show.

Many people react to Jesper's collecting mania.

– The mother of my children says that I am married to graffiti and don't need a partner. I'm like a dipsomaniac, and have considered leaving hip-hop many times. But I feel naked without my hip-hop stuff.

Jesper is very conscious of his reasons for collecting.

– The gadget craze gives me a false sense of security. My father never understood what love is. He only ever talks about what he's bought or the work he's done on his



Jesper lights the light in the closet and stands aside for us. On the floor are sneakers. Many pairs. Only classic models with fat laces. (See frontpage) Some thirty track suits hang on hangers. However, Jesper would like a red-and-white Puma track suit, like the ones in Beat Street.



Some of Jesper's caps





The Danish graffiti stickers that influenced thousands of kids in the eighties



Part of Jesper's pencil collection



A slice of Jesper's living room

house. He never asks me how I am. Jesper's father is an alcoholic. This was a further cause for Jesper's appreciation of hip-hop, with Zulu Nation's anti-drug and anti-violence philosophy.

– The first time I saw a graffiti magazine I became ecstatic, he says. It was Hip Hop Connection.

The 1980s were a period almost entirely devoid of outside graffiti influence. You couldn't find graffiti magazines or videos, and mainly: there was no Internet.

Jesper was inspired by old films, posters and record sleeves:

– Rock Steady Crew, Grandmaster Flash's The Source, B-Boy records were the sort of thing you checked out. There came the 'Stockholmsnatt' Record, which was a stylistic inspiration.

Why did you latch onto hip-hop?

– I used to listen to Heavy Metal, but hip-hop wasn't just music, it was breakdancing and graffiti too, and hip-hop was cool! It was an exciting environment and the trains were fascinating. It was a contrast to Östersund.

In the summer of 1986, Razor and four



A Shame-piece by Jesper

other graffiti writers from Stockholm came to paint at a festival in Östersund. Jesper was fascinated and travelled far out of town to look at the tags the Stockholm crowd had made there.

In April of 1987, Jesper went to Stockholm to stay with a relative who lived along the number 11 subway line. Ever since, he has travelled to Stockholm every year to check out graffiti.

– At first I guess I was mostly interested in tags. In Stockholm, it was especially cool when people tagged on the escalator going down, and in the subway. It made my head spin, there were so many tags everywhere.

**Tobias Barenthin Lindblad  
Malcolm Jacobson**



Tags at a subway station along line 11, April 1987 – Stockholm





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REPRESENTS STOCKHOLM WALLS



Sken, Fatso - 2001



Pbar - 2001



Spyz - 2001



Hotel, Karma - Barcelona 2001



Pke, Nug, Akay - 2001



Lotus, Fuce, Dirte - 2001



Grey, Zeray - 2001





Assholes – 2001



Kcn – 2001



Ersy, Bruce – 2001



Porr – 2001



Kropp – 2001





Fher - 2001



Pms - 2001



Dao - 2002



Saht - 2001



Oditta - 2001



Clis - 2001





Isa, Atk, All, Misfos - 2001



Cazter - 2002



Winner - 2002



Ode - 2001



Sad - 2001

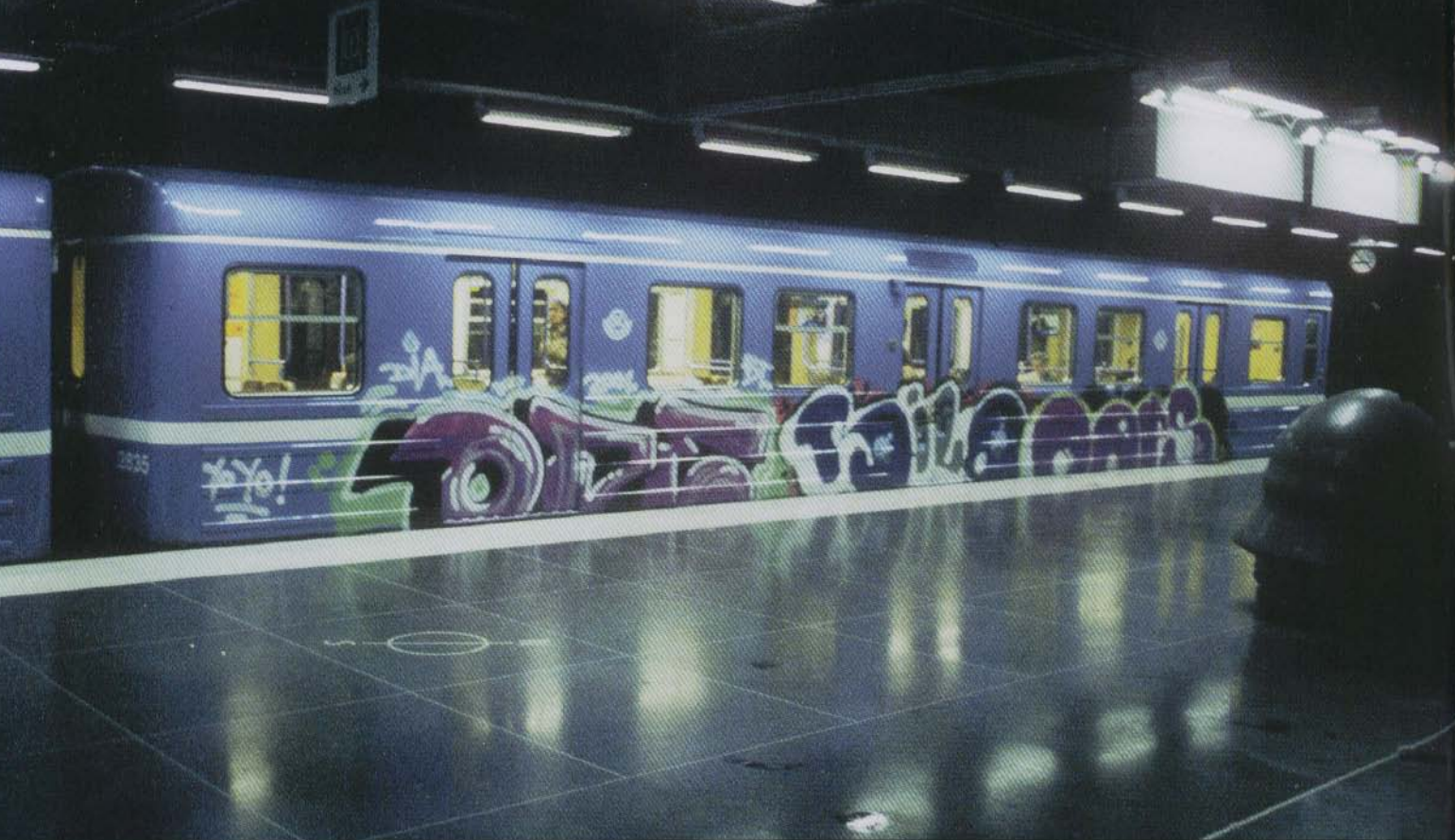


Wufc - 2001



Ape - 2001





Ode, Rilo, Oops – This is the result of a hangover afternoon 2001



Pack – 2001



Pms – 2001



Que, Wufc – 2001



Ovn – 2001



Pay Back – 2002



Reb – 2001





The exhibition Sthlm Underground was closed due to Stockholm City Council's graffiti policy. That started a new graffiti debate where many non-writers suddenly defended graffiti.

The Consequences of Art – An Interview with Björn Hårdstedt

“If you’re turning this into a matter of saying that graffiti is art, you’re on the wrong track.”

Early one January morning.

My daughter Pippi has just had breakfast and got dressed. I’m ironing my yellow fat-laces. We’re going to run to kindergarten. The phone rings.

“Pärre.”

“You the artist?” someone asks.

“Well, artist, graffiti writer, vandal or hardened criminal, depends who’s asking. Who are you?”

“This is Björn Hårdstedt.”

“That’s unbelievable,” I exclaim. “I’ve wanted to talk to you for the last five years.” We interrupt the conversation.

As I said, Pippi has to be run to kindergarten. Björn wants me to stop using his and the Council Association’s name when I speak to the media. Thoughts are whirling in my head. Five years ago I read about the Swedish Association of City Council’s (SveKom) action plan against graffiti. It had a strong influence on me. I had never come across such a concentrated pack of lies about graffiti and graffiti writers. It was signed Björn Hårdstedt and Hans Silborn. Their campaign has resulted in videos, publications, lectures, etc., in an anti-graffiti campaign across the whole country that has seriously hurt graffiti and its practitioners, and has culminated in new law proposals and finally the closure of the Sthlm Underground exhibition. (At the time of writing, the graffiti film *Commuter Madness II* has been reported to the police by Kjell Hultman of the Transit Authority for showing graffiti on

trains – and possibly a few pictures of himself!)

“Hi, it’s Pärre again. So, do you have time?” We chat about coffee, the Riddarfjärden area and ceramics, but soon come to the nitty gritty. I have so many questions for him, since I actually blame him for the current criminalisation of graffiti (the suppression of films and photographs, the closure of legal venues involving graffiti and even the myths about graffiti writers, that they are criminals and drug abusers.

“I didn’t call you so that you could charge me. I don’t work on that case any more.”

“Then why did you call?” I ask.

“To have a dialogue,” he replies.

“What’s a dialogue to you?”

“You start from a mutual subject and then keep conversing.”

I laugh.

“Björn, what do we have in common?”

(I am extremely surprised at his opening gambit, since Zero Tolerance, as SveKom came to call its action plan, declared its intent to shut out all proponents of graffiti from the debate. This means people who act in the graffiti question out of an aesthetic perspective. People with an academic education should especially be avoided in conversation.)

“You’re a graffiti writer, right, and I am very interested in graffiti. I’ve been to look at Sthlm Underground and even bought a painting.”

I don’t believe him. Is he trying to suck up?

I hate myself when I get suspicious. I ask him about the picture he bought. He doesn’t want to talk about it. He tries to wriggle out of it.

“I mostly like *wildstyle*,” he says. “It’s the most creative.”

“Are you lying to me? You bought a painting? To me you, just really sound like a graffiti hater”, I answer.

He claims to love graffiti. Cool, big paintings, that is.

“I’ve got a picture of a Reason painting on the wall in my office,” he says.

On the other hand, if someone were to tag his house, he’d take to his fists.

“Is this a method you could imagine society using? Like in Singapore? Public flogging? There is a pause.

We laugh.

“Shall we get serious?” he asks.

He tells me he was a biker in the 80s. The problems occurred when bikers started driving through town too fast, some of them with the buffers out. It became a social problem. Since the bikers often drove at night, people couldn’t sleep. People got tired of it and wanted to prohibit all motorcyclists. An image of threat against the whole motorbike culture appeared. Then the bikers got together in a national organisation, SMC, in which Björn became chairman. The club distanced itself from the joyriders.

“What I’m trying to say,” he continues, “is

*continues at page 46*





ALIS



WWW.ALIS.DK





NG: Tuna, Jas, Skar, characters by Ikaros, Gaine, Slak, Ribe, character by Ikaros



CP: Character by Maes, Mabe, Maes, Nuek, Ske, Malf

## Playfulness vs. Experience

It was a cold and raw October day. The upstarts CP Crew (Cerebral paretz) had challenged the 90s Norrland style kings NG (Norrlands Guld, also a popular brand of beer in Sweden). It was a meeting of two generations, two attitudes, two styles. I never thought I'd see NG as stylistic traditionalists, but that was the result in their meeting with CP.

Maes from CP says that NG was a crew that many of the CP guys looked up to for many years, but now it felt the time had come to challenge them.

So who won the battle?

NG chose to show CP Crew in wheelchairs, with the caption "It's not a disease, it's an accident of birth" and Ikaros painted a heavily-armed character aiming at CP's paintings.

CP's diss was somewhat more refined. An old man in typical NG shoes urinates into a home distillery machine, that fills cans of Norrlands Guld.

The disses also sum up the two paintings quite well: playfulness and arrogance versus experience and seriousness. Who the winner was is probably defined by whichever style you prefer.

**Jacob Kimvall**



Writers from CP-crew at work







Star, Aod, Bcc, Thick – 2001



Usa=mördare (Usa=murderers) – 2001



Hotel – 2001



Oven – 2001



Sgk Crew – 2001







Akay, Vim, Akay – 2001



Ape, characters by Tiger – 2001



Iak – 2001



Reb, character by Pbar – 2001



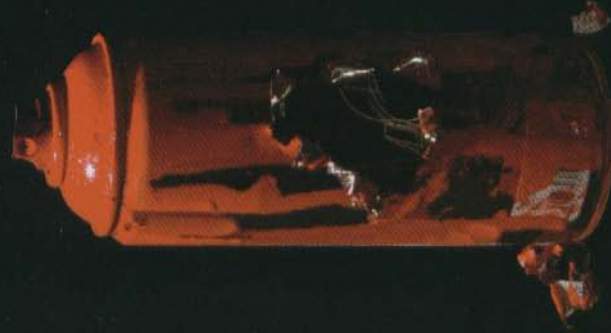
Jeks, characters by Gouge – 2001



Skar, Wick, Trans, Show, Lotus – 2001



# (r) evolution



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# REPRESENTS STOCKHOLM COMMUTER TRAINS



Yxa, Retz, Hook - 2001



Mhr - 2001



Oldor - 2001



Pig, Pms, Mhr, Ida - 2001



Skar - 2001



Fher - 2001



Yxa...



...Atos, Mhr - 2001





Fis, Y2k - 2001



Mhr, Yxa, Ster - 2001



Mhr, 7dc - 2001



Nbc - 2001



Pig, Hook, Hood - 2001



Vsn, Trene - 2001







Flek, Elle – German commuter train in a Stockholm yard 2002

## Foreign trains seen in Stockholm!

Since the end of 2001 Danish commuter trains are hired to Stockholm. This is because of a shortage in commuter trains. Soon German commuter trains will be taken into traffic as well. What's next; a New York subway train, or those Berlin subway cars that were taken by the Russians after world war 2?



Sad – 2001



Clash – Danish train in Stockholm 2001



Bccaod – 2001



Pms – 2001



Nasi, Yxa, Hook – 2001





One of the clearest examples of graffiti-like lettering. In front of a store – Varanasi 2001

## India: More raw than high-tech

**Although Indian culture is virtually uninfluenced by hip hop, let alone graffiti writing, Indian graphic and commercial design share many features with western graffiti.**

Except for the trains, all the spots that are usually taken over by writers in the west, are hit by commercials in India; tracksides, bridges, walls or just some deserted shack in the middle of nowhere. Murals or billboards are virtually everywhere and most of them are painted by hand, sometimes by people standing on sketchy-looking scaffolds made of wooden sticks. The technique is highly developed and much of the lettering comes with whitelines and dropshades and stars or doodads in the background.

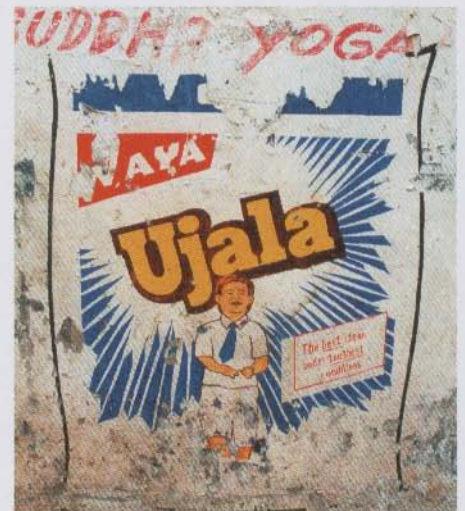
Aside from the piecelike lettering, you often see some excellent penmanship in the calligraphic styles of smaller signs. Most of them are written in the highly decorative Hindi script which is the main language of India. You can find a large variety of fonts and the innovation of the sign painters leaves nothing to be desired. The graphic style is often somewhat retro, and the fact that it is painted by hand gives it a very nice touch, rarer than the hi-tech glossy stuff that you see back home.

Spray cans are very hard to find, but in commercial painting, spray pistols are used for filling in the larger areas and for the fading effect. The little wall-writing to be seen

that is not commercial is mostly political or some "I love you" type stuff.

Different alphabets are a great source of inspiration for writing; It's amazing to check out lettering in a totally different alphabet like Hindi. You look at these unintelligible letters only to find new letterforms growing out of them to create ideas for writing. Enjoy.

Rasmus Hansen



Varanasi 2001

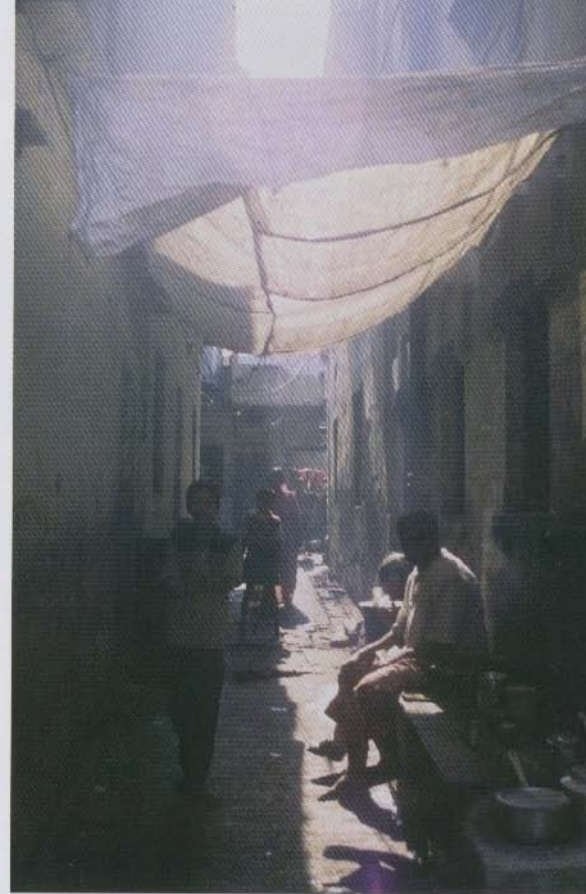


The script on the blue sign is the southern language, Tamil – Varanasi 2001





Varanasi 2001



A typical view of the backstreets of Varanasi



Varanasi 2001



The monkey-god Hanuman – Varanasi 2001



Varanasi 2001



Poster – Varanasi 2001



Varanasi 2001



Commercial for the national cola, thumbs up – Rishikesh 2001









Cazter, Caey, Obee, characters by Ikaros – Stockholm 2001



Faze...



Ikaros – Umeå 2001



...Sabe – Copenhagen 2001



Reil, Zeray – Stockholm 2001



Blue, Karma – Nørrebro, Copenhagen 2001





Punk – 2001



Lups – 2001



Fire – 2001



Motown – "Studiegängen" 2001



los – 2001



Acte – 2001



Vns – 2001



Soul – 2001



Scuba, Kil – 2001

Gothenburg has two legal walls. "Röda sten", as one of them is known, is situated in the harbour in a part of the city called "Majorna". The other wall, "Studiegängen" is to be found in the east of Gothenburg, in "Björkekärra". Both of the walls fits about 20 pieces each.



Bingo, Alive – "Studiegängen" 2001



Bingo, Winter, Sexton (16), Enia, characters by Punk – "Röda sten" 2001





Koollio by Kool, Ollio, background roof tops by Dds,Vns - 2001



lgs - 2001



Vns - 2001



Usa - 2001



Renk - 2001



Kk - 2001



Link - 2001



Otek, Jinx...



...Fire, Ollio - 2001



Oops,Oops,Oops - 2001





Oops, Soul - 2001



Ogat, X-man, Zoom - 2001



Hitek - 2001



X-man - 2001



Rois, Dexie - 2001



Quasii - 2001



Ollio - 2001



Slav - 2001



Ryan, Oban, characters by Deuz - 2001



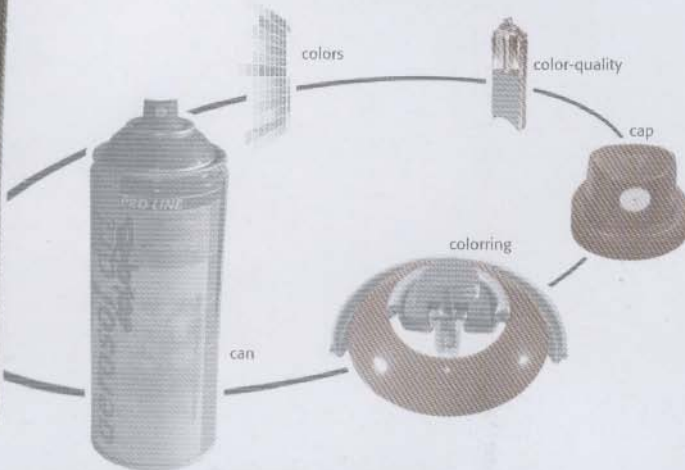
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Rockin' da North Jam at Kiasma (Museum of Modern Art) Helsinki 2001

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Ingo, Beq – Lund 2001



Mentor – 2001



Late – in Holland 2001



Ofec – 2001



Jiwl – 2001



Kc – Lund 2001



Ted – 2001



Heor – Helsingborg 2001



Ofec – 2001





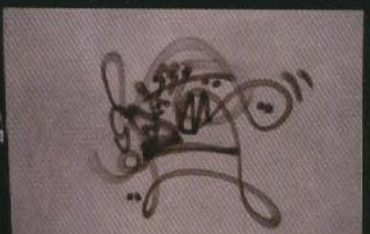
Heor, Dino – Helsingborg Central Station at 14.15, 2001



Poer, Dille – Lund 2001



Thed – 2001



Cop – 2001



Sw – Helsingborg 2001



Hk, Beq – Lund 2001



Feff – 2001



Cairo – 2001



Mentor, Ofec, Min – 2001





Ner Crew - Malmö 2001



Mentor - Bridgetrain 2001



Ner - Pågatåg (commutertrain) 2001



Hools, Cairo - Ramlösa 2001



Hello, Bek, Leon - 2001



Leon - 2001



Sw, Off - Pågatåg, Lund 2001





Cairo, Mentor – Bridgetrain (Malmö-Copenhagen shuttle) 2001



Bek, Kc – Lund 2001



Fool – Lund 2001



Ner – Interregio 2001



Näu – Paga train in the city of Västerås 2001



Wena – 2001



Leon – Paga train 2001



Besk, Hefa, Bluf, Hello, TheD – The train is standing in the Malmö buff 2001





Adam, Foe – Stockholm 2001



Stockholm 2001



Nuage – London subway 2001



Itso – Århus, Denmark 2001



Made – Stockholm 2001



Assholeism – Uppsala, Sweden 2001



Istedgade, Copenhagen 2001





Itso - Inter regio train, Copenhagen 2001



Street communication





REPRESENTS SWEDEN WALLS



Fels – Gävle 2001



Frö – Gävle 2001



NG – Umeå 2001



Fiol – Gävle 2001



Record – Luleå 2001



Ape – Umeå 2001



Twig – Gävle 2001



Reil, Dekis – Östersund 2001



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Rock Island, character by Ruskgig, Allt kommer att ordna sig (Everything will be alright) by Maes – Malmö 2001



Rutin, Goner, Radon, Anse, Auto – Norrköping 2001



Plaster – Umeå 2001



Mask – 2001



Abstracts – Malmö 2001



Skar – Umeå 2001



Trans – Stockholm 2001



Done, Zero, Mesk – Malmö 2001



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lans, Cake, Dekis, Izek, Moys – 2001



Roots – 2001



Kast – 2001



Pyc, Ringo – 2001



Dekis – 2001



Ringo, Tyse – 2001



Cake, Dekis – 2001



Fukzh...



...Ringo, Dekis, lanz – 2001





Hioff – Norrköping Tram 2001



Dekis – 2001



Himan – 2001



Saht – 2001



Que – 2002



Lady, Käringtand – 2001



Reil – 2001



Side – 2001



Sex, Näu – 2001



Jvs, Dr Död, Burma – Regina train 2001



Saht, Dryk, Näu – 2001





Yep - 2001



Tms - 2001



Yep - 2001



Pheon - 2001



Raise - 2001



Misery - 2001



Exile - Seinjoki, 2001



Anmal - 2001

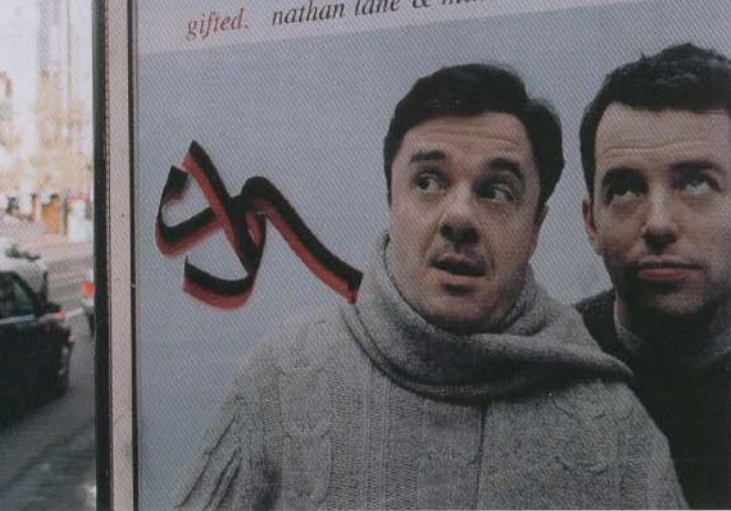


Fuse - 2002



Rign - 2001





Sh, note the two-color effect

## San Francisco

Similar to New York there seems to be a strong tradition of tagging in San Francisco. Classic local inventions like glassetching is carried on by writers like MQue and Percept. I even find the buffing pretty decorative...



Matokie, Twister, Meta

### Adams



Percept



Mq

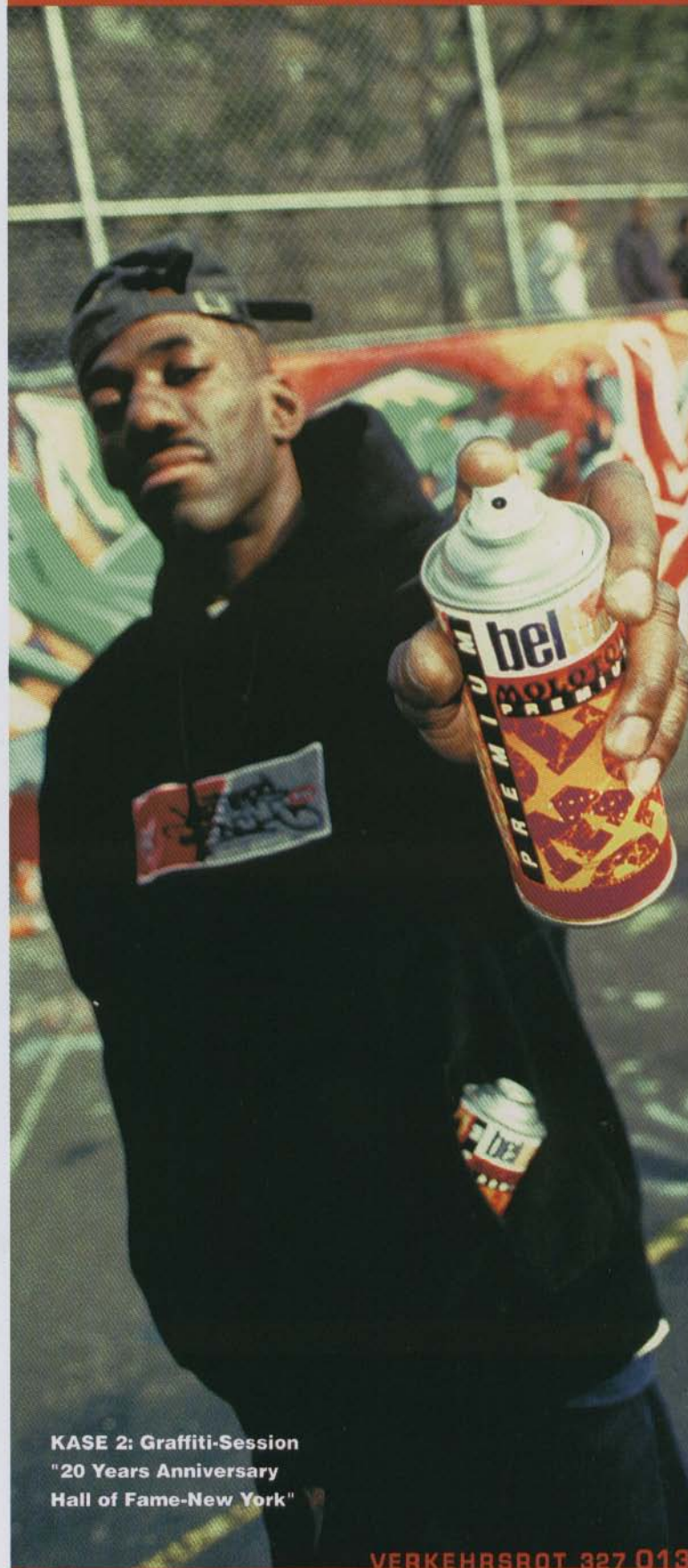


Web, glass-etching pencil



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# REPRESENTS INTERNATIONAL SUBWAYS



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...Mbay...



...Reb – New York Subway 2002



Raff – Berlin Subway 2001



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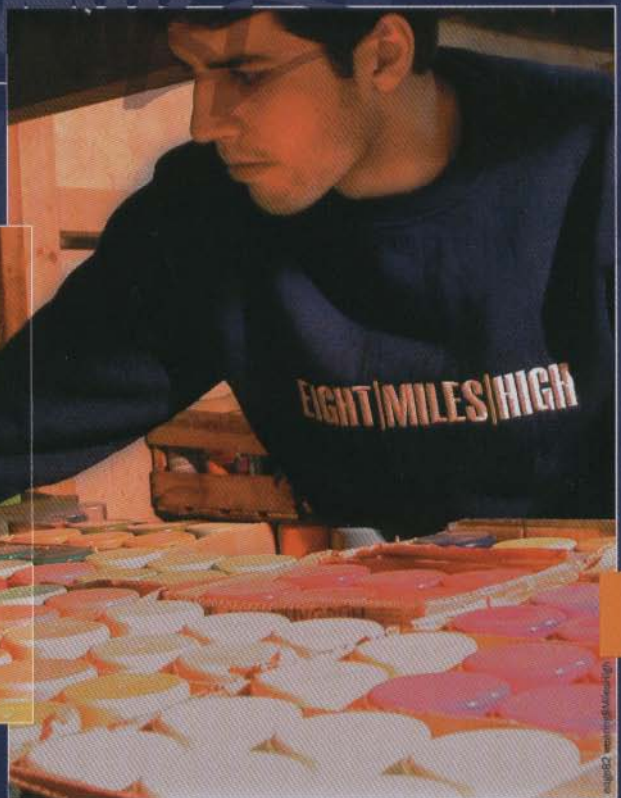
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# REPRESENTS INTERNATIONAL TRAINS



Torch – Spain 2001



Nehs – Commuter train, France 2001



Duke – Spain 2001



Golpe – Commuter train, Barcelona 2001



Carlo, Slafe – Stuttgart commuter train 2001



Sw – Copenhagen 2001



Radio – Interregio, Denmark 2001



Rocky – Commuter train, Barcelona 2001



Chunk – Commuter train, Germany 2001



Daam, Marley, Bamm, Icht – Germany 2001.



that graffiti writers have to keep a clean house. Get organised and distance themselves from the dregs."

I tell him that the Sthlm Underground Exhibition is exactly such an initiative. It is an association of 700 youths who organise events as an alternative to illegal writing. And what's more...

"I am the first person to take exception to the closure!" he exclaims.

I laugh, shake my head and remind him that over the past five years, SveKom and the Transit Authority have been determined to stop all legal graffiti activity. The action plan has also led to several councils adopting a Zero Tolerance policy, in which, amongst other things, legal walls are prohibited. He changes his tone.

"Okay! Okay! Shall we talk about the exhibition? Okay! Anna conned the fire department!" (Anna Ekholm was co-arranger of Sthlm Underground. The fire department offered the exhibition room.) "First, she stole a paper from the Modern Museum on which she wrote what she was going to use..."

"Hey!" I interrupt him. "Stole papers from the Modern Museum? She used to work there!"

He allows the interruption and calms down a bit.

"This is what I mean," I say. "Criminalisation. Opponents of graffiti always assume that there is some sort of criminal root. When you and Hans Silborn started your action plan, why didn't you meet up with graffiti writers and people with some insight into writing? Take Staffan Jacobson..."

"That crazy bastard." He laughs when he hears Jacobson's name.

"What do you mean?" I naturally ask. (Dr. Staffan Jacobson is one of those who studied graffiti and found that the methods suggested by SveKom and the Transit Authority, chemical technology, policing and law-making, have been tested everywhere else in the world but never entailed a decrease in illegal painting. Quite the reverse. Jacobson also found that legal alternatives have so far been the only thing to decrease illegal writing. Methods that SveKom and the Transit Authority stringently discard for some reason, even to the point of working against them.)

Björn tells me how it all started 7 or 8 years ago. He and Hans Silborn were given the task of trying to decrease illegal graffiti writing. One driving force behind this project was the Labour local politician in Västerås Åke Hillman; another was Kjell Hultman of the Transit Authority. Both are rabid opponents of graffiti in all its forms. The shit must be eradicated. Åke laid down the agenda and handled the contacts. Björn and Hans did as they were told and started their

plan with the information Åke passed on to them. They did not feel they had to check the facts and figures he was providing them with. It was all collated, put on the Internet, printed in brochures, used for source material to propaganda films, etc. At one point they had 37 informants in the country propagating for Zero Tolerance.

"I mean," says Björn, "we became the mouthpiece to people out there in the country who might not be so damn verbal or good at expressing themselves but hate graffiti for destroying so much. We were in touch with property owners and others who wanted to see an end to all this misery." One day they read a debate article in a newspaper signed Staffan Jacobson.

"It was crazy. The guy was insane. He was using personal attacks."

Björn says that they responded to the charge, and the dispute was afoot and continued for some time.

"But," I ask, "Jacobson was quite devastated, just as I was when I first read your home page. Can't you understand if his reaction was strong?"

"Of course. But you don't need to use personal attacks. The graffiti debate was really hard back then. We were provoked, and wanted to be provocative. Today it's different."

"How so?"

"It seems as though the Swedish people, the cultural establishment, and several politicians want graffiti."

"My God! You mean that for all these years, Zero Tolerance is based on a personal conflict between you and Dr. Jacobson?"

"Well. It wasn't just me."

"Will SveKom stop criminalizing graffiti?"

"Well, we're not talking about total repression any more. Legal alternatives may be tested."

We talk for a long time, amongst other things about cultural Sweden, something for which Björn shows a certain disdain.

"It's damn easy to point at something and call it art without taking the consequences." He goes on to say that the European City of Culture year in Stockholm 1998 was a disaster. Especially in the case of information on laws and regulation.

"Do you have anything against culture as such?" I ask eventually.

"Well, maybe I'm just jealous. Maybe I'd rather be the one sitting on that couch..."

"Exactly," I interrupt, "That's where you should be instead of the cultural councillor Birgitta Rydell, who just sits there without the slightest idea what she's talking about. She just keeps repeating mindless phrases from what you and Hans Silborn put into print. *They are hardened criminals, they take drugs, they are hardened criminals*, like a parrot. Don't you feel a certain responsibility when she gets blamed for something you participated in formulating?"



Ikaros from the exhibition Sthlm Underground

"Well, as I say, it wasn't just me."

He tells me again that he no longer works on the case, but has still been in contact with Rydell to give her some support and arguments. "But only via e-mail."

I ask him again what he bought at Sthlm Underground, now that the atmosphere has lightened up.

"Just a lithograph," he answers, waveringly.

"Ikaros, then!" I smile. "How come?"

"I would rather have had a painting. The one with green eyes. It was nice. But it was sold."

"Tell me more. What did you like about the painting more than that it was nice? What seduced you?"

"Well... Something about the eyes."

"Do you know that those pictures represent men crying?"

"Hmm. They remind me of another artist I like. Charlie Christensen. The one with the ducks. That green in the eyes. Verging on the sick. Without stepping over the line. I also see influences from cubism, but in modern form: I like the angular, spiky pictorial language Ikaros uses. You could put it this way: *I can place myself in front of his painting and kind of see myself.*"

"Hey. I've been making notes while we talked. Is it okay if I write this down and publish it?"

"That's okay. Just remember I'm not talking for the Association of Councils but for myself, personally."

"Okay."

Of course I call Staffan Jacobson after the call and ask him what he has to say about Björn's statements and their row. He admits that they got into polemics at an early stage, and that the debate sometimes became quite absurd. He has a hard time answering how their conflict has affected the debate as a whole, resulting in the shutting out of graffiti proponents. "I can only talk about my research, which is well-supported. For Zero Tolerance people, that sort of thing just isn't important."

Pärre Andreasson



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