

# Shades of Solitude

14/03/05 12:18

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Galleri Strömbom, Sylvia Naimark (until 03/04/05)

Sylvia Naimark's paintings manage to be both discreet and powerful. The works exhibited at Galleri Strömbom clearly show that painting is an indispensable way of commenting on the world around us.

There is an old chestnut about painting that if something can be said in another way, there is no point in painting it. There has to be a degree of artistic necessity in a work of art that is executed with paint on a flat surface. This is confirmed by Sylvia Naimark's oils that are on display at Galleri Strömbom, one of Uppsala's most reliable art galleries. Sylvia Naimark's paintings inhabit the minimal exhibition space of the gallery in a way that powerfully refutes the tiresome, recurring suggestion that painting is dead, to stay with the art clichés.

In eight paintings, which are dominated by the same shades of greyish blue and brown in thin washes, the viewer becomes part of something like a paradoxically fast or instantaneous slow motion shot.

There is a mournful undertone. The figures in the pictures emerge from the hazy colour in stylised or sketchy form and seem alone even when they are in groups. Even in a painting that depicts a round dance, the figures stand together without making contact. Their upstretched hands are met with no real response. They are not apathetic. They are isolated, perhaps even alienated.

Another work shows an indoor swimming pool or a blurred beach. On different levels, human figures are on the point of diving in. Some have already done so. They barely stand out. The water is in the foreground. The figures and the background merge, like the gasps of a breathless man. They are all shades of solitude but this is just stated.

There is no complaint.

The feeling of reality intrudes. The fact that the figures and the spaces in which they move are abstract and suggested only reinforces and supports this perception.

It is hard to decide whether the viewer is a participant or just a voyeur on the outside. The most lively figure is a dog that appears in two pictures together with a boy. They take turns to stand in the foreground. Boy and dog and dog and boy. The movement of the animal is more dynamic than that of the people.

Caught mid-leap, it is not affected like the others by being observed.

Between the boy and the dog there is contact that is lacking among the groups of human figures. But there is no futile romanticisation of the relationship between people and animals. The boy appears quite casually, together with his dog, as a presenter or narrator. Any attempt to explain what is portrayed is just one of many possible interpretations. There are few artists with the ability to be as equally unobtrusive and powerfully emotionally explicit as Sylvia Naimark.

UNT *Uppsala Nya Tidning* ( *Uppsala daily newspaper* )