

I N M A N G A L L E R Y

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Inman Gallery is pleased to present

Sigrid Sandström
Action

May 20 – June 30, 2006

Gallery hours: Tues. - Sat., 11-6



Inman Gallery is pleased to present an exhibition of new work by **Sigrid Sandstrom** entitled “**Action**”. The exhibition opens with a public reception on Saturday May 20, 2006.

Inspired by a visceral and very personal relationship to her native landscape, Sandström presents us with a rich collection of musings on humanity’s complex relationship to the natural world. For the past six years, themes of exploration and the search for utopia have fascinated the artist and have been the focus of her work. Though a painter first, Sandström shows a voracious appetite for exploration through the diverse media presented. In **Action**, paintings, video, slide projection, and photographs coexist in a carefully structured presentation and demonstrate the breadth of the artist’s practice.

A large black rectangle of nylon cloth, *Black Flag* hangs in the middle of the main gallery space, and exerts a solemn, funereal presence. For the artist, the flag represents a “free zone”; a quiet protest that simultaneously recalling the work of Kasimir Malevich and Ad Reinhardt. In one corner of the room sits *Hargrave’s Commitment 0.667(Scout)*, a replica of the original box kite designed by the Australian inventor Lawrence Hargrave (1850-1915), inside of which has been placed stacks of survival rations, chocolate and canned goods, their wrappers removed, revealing the silver aluminum of each container. The kite is the artist’s monument to the boundless faith and focused vision of Hargrave and the 19th century explorer Roald Amundsen, who reached the South Pole, claiming it for Norway in 1911. The object’s similarity to a piece of Modernist furniture brings the early 20th century concepts of unified design into the mix. In the end, the simple structure serves as an homage to these ideas, even as the artist acknowledges them as endearing, anachronistic pursuits.

A slide projection in the far corner of the gallery presents a series of 80 individual photographs, documenting road signs covered by black drapes during construction. The found images read at first as intentional interventions, rather than the practical covering of defunct traffic directions. The blank signs, while negations of old direction, present a new opportunity, the proverbial “blank slate” where new ideas can take root.

Seven small paintings hang among these objects. Ranging from full-blown romantic depictions of idealistic figures from the 20th century (*Una Malevich* and *Thoreau’s Ax*), to more conceptual combinations of austere minimalism and heroic romantic depictions of the landscape (*Untitled Shape Paintings*), they are presented as objects of desire. The artist, keenly aware of the anachronistic position that painting occupies in contemporary

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life, is nevertheless inexorably drawn to the mysterious power that they exert. For her, painting forces the maker to be completely engaged in the present and committed to the act. Each painting then is an act of faith, an exploration into the unknown, requiring daring and bravery, and complete immersion in the process.

The second, smaller gallery contains three pieces. A simple video of a flagged buoy on a vast body of water is flanked by two presentations of wood grain: one is a 19' painted scroll and the other a wood block print. The surface of the water and the wood grain are startlingly similar; an unexpected formal connection that reinforces the presentation of the video as a painting.

Further, the cohabitation of painting with video and photographic images points the viewer to understand that the places depicted in the paintings *could* exist, that they are in fact not more fictional than the photographed images presented.



The exhibition begins and ends with a large digital photograph in which scraps of magazine photographs (images of snowy crags and endless mountain-scapes) are taped to the artist's studio floor. In *Untitled*, 2006 the use of both abstract and representational imagery exemplifies Sandström's quest to create both the physical and psychic feelings of place.

Sandström hopes that we can understand the artist's practice as a true exploration, a quest, but one in which the questions asked are more important than the answers given. She states "Previously the sublime was a possibility; now it needs to be invented."

Sigrid Sandström was born in 1970 in Stockholm, Sweden and currently lives and works in Red Hook, NY. She received her MFA in Painting from Yale University in 2001. Sandström's work was recently included in the Contemporary Arts Museum of Houston's 25th anniversary exhibition, "Perspectives @ 25", and her first solo museum exhibition opens May 25 at the Frye Art Museum. Entitled *Ginnungagap: Recent Works by Sigrid Sandstrom*, the show is accompanied by a full-color catalogue with essay by Frye curator Robin Held.