

I abandon myself to the fever of dreams, in search for new laws.
—Antonin Artaud

There is no shortage of seductive playgrounds to explore within Åsa Cederqvist's oeuvre; she invites you to enter her cave—but with no confirmed exit. The Swedish artist exemplifies a woman in transition; she relays fierce tangents linked to the pleasurable yet rough process of self-liberation and hyper-awareness. Rejecting stifling dogmatisms and pointed philosophies, Cederqvist offers the possibility of temporary relief from disappointing realities, opting for an unruly site where desires are at least confronted, and at best: dismantled, recontextualized or fulfilled. She rarely appears coy or hesitant; her honesty and unorthodox versatility validate her brash stance. The artist takes risks and ensnares others to do the same.

In response to certain frictions, Cederqvist has become a shrewd warrior harboring a talent for alteration; she embraces fluidity, where liquified assimilation, improvisation and adaptability are sleek tools used to slide among margins—to confront disbelief, taboo and grief. With the notions of 'fight,' 'flight' or 'freeze' comes a common response: that one must choose between modes. Yet, Cederqvist's flair lies in her ability to incorporate all of these states—through her process, her struggle is laid bare. And in this familiarity, others might see themselves in her. Similar to an adept hunter, the artist trusts her core instincts. Once the beat of one's own drum is heard and magnified, already established dictations can be discredited with greater ease. With her choice to exalt nature, she highlights a love that breeds within its savage domain. With each decision to reject or question, Cederqvist affirms an 'Otherness' teetering between queer and defined, between malleable and stationary, between worthy and barbaric. Her provocations invoke the tainted, misled and muted; she moulds DIY worlds where dynamic forces possess raw agency and the will to revolt.

In the midst of this metamorphosis, one looks to the future. The spirit is no longer primarily housed in the body, for it now appears intertwined with the digital. The soul mingles with the chip, and the corporeal body breeds with data—and on an unforgiving scale. One could be intimidated by this emergent logic, but Cederqvist views it as an invitation to subvert not only the male gaze but the visceral bindings of soft flesh. The power of touch is an effective instrument and connective reminder of how specimens remain linked. That which was penetrated can now be entered; that which was filthy now appears sacred; that which was dormant is now virile. Here: fiction can be reality—and vice versa.

The artist reconfigures transcendence, and others may join her aspiration to escape the chronic conditions of suffering, rage and encumbrance. *To bend or break*: she teases boundaries so that they are neither locked-in nor obvious. Cederqvist's earlier sculptures defy gravity as they are flowing swaths suspended in mid-air—gestural strokes of abandonment. Her integration of collage asserts that fragmentation is a recurring physiological state. The artist stresses instability and uncertainty, shuffling the framework to catechize action (or lack thereof) in response to an exploitative world. She unearths a *positive* chaos—an untimely disorder—which serves as an accoutrement for progress. The era calls for a more relentless language.

Many of Cederqvist's creative initiatives are restorative and emotionally gripping, with the intent to exhaust the status quo or dissolve unreasonable hierarchies. In a sense, she is invested in the complexities of justice and truth, yet her methods of expunging opposition to these ideals careen between ethereal and brutal. Consensual submission towards intimacy is often a prerequisite; those involved in the artist's communal experiments of utopic excess know this to be correct. Yet, one may choose to observe from a distance—similar to a curious voyeur or self-absorbed flâneur just passing through. The freak, wayward mind and seemingly invisible pariah are equally welcome to approach the stage, for Art should not discriminate. The artist prepares for new possibilities of both authenticity and artificiality—even if this 'newness' is perceived as askew or sullied. Cederqvist's ambition to coalesce diverse methodologies supersedes any discomfort brought on by awkward attempts to fuse paradoxical energies. Someone may view a primal dance, muddy ritual or masked visage; another may detect the uncanny signal of what they once were or never will be.

Now: zoom in on the elusive presence of a sea creature buried within dark waves; the slow breathing animal has been agitated from its slumber. With no clear view of what lies ahead, the animal is cautious and expects strife. But as no identifiable enemy shows itself to the lurking one, it begins to sense that the monster sequestered in its netherworld is the ambivalent organism itself. Where can it hide—when the dominant threat exists inside its own shell? Evolution can be painful yet gratifying; one rarely feels ennui when forced to change. As one surveys this entity in isolation, one may relate to its loneliness or find solace in its courage to move—or become something more or different. And in this bizarre paradise of the imagination, the presence of any new beast elicits an upgraded rationale.

—*Jacquelyn Davis*