

Metamorphosis

Julie Nord

Julie Nord collects pictures. Not like others are collecting stamps based on a systematic principle of order, but obsessive, hoarding. Pictures from old children's books, from medieval folk tales and myths, from everyday life and suburban idyll, or horror films, spiritualism, and ornamentation.

These are images we know, some of them we even know so well that we no longer think about their meaning. Visual clichés and symbols, which are so deeply integrated into our way of seeing and thinking that we no longer consider how they work or what they tell us. Pictures that shape our world and our way of thinking, but which we take for granted.

In Julie Nord's art, existing realities are threaded up and knitted together into something else; to new visual narratives that balance between the familiar and the imaginative. These are precise, meticulous universes that are right on the edge of chaos; right where we can still recognize the origin of the images, but we can also accept that they have integrated into a narrative that is foreign to us. Right in the middle of a transformation, a metamorphosis, where the images we know but no longer see accumulate and cross-pollinate each other in a visual narrative that makes us open our eyes wide.

When Julie Nord lets the brush slide over the watercolor paper, the picture archive is with her as a subconscious, blind passenger. I imagine how she, with the automatic drawing as a tool, evokes shapes that gather into mysterious figures, and then in the next moment, they almost dissolve into pure ornamentation. How one state flows into another and how she must stop herself to dwell on the transition and maintain the tension right where it stands strongest. Plant arms twist along the edge of the paper and become nervous systems, flower buds open like genitals, and openings in the body get long eyelashes that flash out to us.

In some works, the brush is supplemented with the sewing machine and the smooth watercolor paper is replaced by a thick, almost textile-like material with coarse structures and frayed edges. Here, the picture archive becomes physical when Julie Nord assigns each motif its own piece of paper, and then she eventually sews them together into one narrative that is on the edge of what is rationally comprehensible. I imagine this huge pile of image patches, from which she picks out motifs and sews them arduously and slowly into each other, sometimes in many layers. Behind an image layer, one senses the contours of a figure that is trapped inside the material or can be imagined as a ghost behind a transparent layer. Elsewhere, the image may open, the material may collapse so that openings in the motif become physical openings that can invite us in or keep us on the outside of the picture surface.

In a large watercolor work, a young girl's face rests on the water surface in a lake. Her eyes are closed, perhaps she is asleep, and around her figures, that escape classifications, move. Humans and animals merge into new constellations, nature takes over and blurs the differences between gender, species, and age. The work is kept in a luminous, clear color of the kind found in the imagery of alternative new age movements, and behind it, in the gorge between blue-gray mountains with human faces, lures a rainbow-colored mandala - or is it a genital?

Through it, we may sense an entrance to a space where the world may be more ambiguous, queerer, than it is at this time, which seems marked by climate crisis and an impending ecological disaster. I imagine that in Julie Nord's insistence on the metamorphosis lies a dream of being able to dissolve contradictions and soften up on the sharp edges that define the young girl as a delimited entity, separated from the mountains behind her. A dream of the freedom that lies in being able to dissolve the boundaries between the familiar and the fantastic, between nature and human and between man and woman in order to be part of a new narrative. A reality that is fluid, in constant negotiation and change.

- Louise Steiwer, Copenhagen 2021

Julie Nord (b. 1970 DK) studied at The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in 1994-2001. In 2019 Julie Nord received New Carlsberg Foundation Art Prize. Her exhibition list includes *Julie Nord, Graphic Works* (2019) at Bomuldsfabrikens Kunsthall, Arendal, Norge, *Dagene er Data -Tegninger til Lone Hørslevs digte* (2019) at Galleri Tom Christoffersen, *Fantom* (2018) at Charlotte Fogh gallery, Århus, *Brown Study* (2017) at Galleri Tom Christoffersen, Kbh, *Domestic Disturbances* (2016) at Kunsthallen Hå Gamle Præstegård, Norge, *Just Like Home* at Kunstforeningen Gammel Strand, Kbh (2014) and *Kunsten, Ålborg* (2013), *The Children* (2013), V1 Gallery, København, *Family* (2012) at Galleri Brandstrup, Oslo, *Xenoglossy* (2011) at Nordisk akvarelmuseum, Sverige, *Dark Ink* (2010) at Turku Artmuseum, Turku, Finland, *Xenoglossy* (2010) at ARoS, Aarhus Kunstmuseum, Århus, *Afternoon at the Fringe* (2007) at Houldsworth Gallery, London, *Somewhere not that far away* (2007) at Politikkens Hus, Kbh, *Elsewhere* (2006) at Mogadishni, Kbh, *The Cycle* (2004) at "Foundation La Caixa," Leida, Spanien, *From Wonderland with Love* (2004) at Aarhus Kunstmuseum.

Her works are represented in many public and private collections including The Walsall Museum of Fine Art, UK, Statens Museum for Kunst, ARoS, Arken, KUNSTEN, 21C Museum, Kentucky, USA, The Nordic Watercolor Museum, SE, Bibliotheque Nationale de France, Paris, Trapholt, Vejle Kunstmuseum, Lyonel-Feininger-Museum, Germany.