

PUBLIC SERVICE

Symphony Hour

Oliver Sundqvist

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Maybe in some ways I am kind of childish, says Oliver Sundqvist with a crooked smile, while showing cartoon still images that inspired his most recent works, created for the exhibition *Symphony Hour* at Public Service. The middle frames capturing Disney's classic characters in action - white gloves, eyes, legs and feet intermingling, swirling and multiplying - serve as a conceptual, formal, and material departure point for the exhibition. In many ways, these frames embody the artistic foundation of Sundqvist's practice: the capturing of energy, the deconstruction of form, and - perhaps most essential - a deep-rooted interest in investigating the socio-psychological ramifications of modern consumerism and pop culture.

As such, the works in *Symphony Hour* are as playful and straightforward as they are serious and complex. Sundqvist seeks to articulate the interrelations between fiction and reality, between exterior and interior, between concept and form and consequently there is an embodied tension between the pieces as they - like a symphony orchestra - stand shoulder to shoulder. While each piece has its own, unique character, they create a collective whole when positioned together, each supporting and nuancing the reading of the other - *Until one of them freestyles and ruins the harmony* - as Sundqvist says with a laugh, looking at the bright red boxing glove that looks like it may tip over at any point. *When does entertainment transition into destructiveness, and vice versa?*, the sculptures seem to ask. Thus, in *Symphony Hour*, Sundqvist captures the intricate social dynamics of the collective body, by creating a setting that carries both the potential for harmony and chaos. Hierarchies are being (re)negotiated between the pieces, leaving the impression that the works are simultaneously teammates and opponents. They are all part of the symphony orchestra, but *they also size each-other up, like could the little bulky one take out the tall and slender in a fight?*, Sundqvist says, examining two neighboring works.

Whether it is a symphony or a boxing match, Sundqvist is its director, and there is a strong artistic intention behind every work. Sundqvist builds upon the foundation laid by Arte Povera, by incorporating various found objects and throwaway materials into his pieces; a bottle, a keg, a plastic penguin. These function as creative dogmas in his artful conception, underlining his aim to challenge and disrupt the values of commercialized society and of the art world. In the series of large-scale inflatables, Sundqvist further elaborates on the interrelations between surface and interior, as he introduces 'air' as a type of ultimate abstraction of the void. Sundqvist recalls the process and calls it *an odd experience to send the drawings for production without having my hands 'in' them* - thereby precisely accentuating his intention with the new inflatable pieces; to comment on the ambiguity of the artist's role in a society concerned with mass-production and surface.

While veritably contemporary in his expression, i.e. by the use of a high-contrast palette and an intentional 'haphazardness' in the modelling, Sundqvist draws on classical sculpture tradition in many of his compositions; a bust, a torso, a full-figure, all resting on pedestals. In *Polar Pals Sort* and *The Stupor Salesman*, Sundqvist comments on the transportation and storage issues maintained by the art world, by combining pedestal and crate in one. In other works, he plays with the classic art-philosophical dilemma; where does the work end and the pedestal begin? And is there even a difference today?

The new body of work, created specifically for *Symphony Hour*, opens up new horizons in Sundqvist's practice by (literally!) breathing fresh air into his core narrative: to reveal the middle frames of the animation that is contemporary life. When leaning closer, one can almost hear the sculptures ironically whisper: *That's all, folks!*

