ALMINE RECH

Erik Lindman
Balke (Prélude)

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These new paintings are dedicated to the early 19th century Norwegian Romantic painter Peder Balke, whom Erik Lindman describes as a fellow *bricoleur*: Balke utilized balled up rags, strié swipes—a host of decorative painting tricks, to execute his fantasy-charged Northern landscapes. “Balke’s paintings are not overstated at all,” Lindman argues “they are the result of a man using what is at hand…” positioning this little known Scandinavian in line with contemporary practices that open the pictorial to signs appropriated from everywhere, adjacent vocabularies to far-flung syntactical realms.

In Lindman’s works there has almost always been a prize at the center, something retrieved from elsewhere then repurposed within, providing a subject, figure or contrast with the surrounding frontal plane, be it painted or another surface, such as plywood or burlap.

His first mature works began with scraps of aluminum, plastic or other materials—colored, distressed fragments jettisoned from construction sites or abandoned projects—picked up from the curbs and alleys of New York City. These shards, once reconstituted within a new work, performed a pivotal role both as accent and structural element.

These re-incorporations might be called *spolia*, to use a term borrowed from archaeology, as when an architectural embellishment, cameo or chip from a building’s decorative frieze, or a temple, a statue or sarcophagi, is reused in a new context in a construction or monument—any kind of significant object that has been re-dedicated or utilized for a different purpose in a new setting.

Traditional *spolia* came about due to expediency, it was more convenient to build with used materials than new ones, similar to Lindman’s Balke using things “at hand” but there were also overtones of the reliquary and of anachronism.

Which brings us to the recent works and their distinctive relief areas of putty-like, perforated epoxy resin adhered to the center. These forms replicate some weird lump of organic matter straight from surgery, or grabbed from an animal’s mouth—a different kind of trophy (which incidentally, was the original meaning of *spolia*, from the spoils of war) on which Lindman imparts a nobility conferred through an exterior bracketing of aluminum bars and an interior bracketing with strips of cloth.

He paints around the center and often drags the brush over the middle, and then paints it again. And again. Lindman has always been a sensual but matter of fact painter; avoiding the flourish; anti-spectacle; but he has begun to utilize gel that changes color, metallic paints, reflective glass beads and textural pumice. Though the center area is a fictional rather than a found form, it seems an offspring of his more recent forays of observing, for example, birds and trees. He recently published a book of drawings based on leaf and branch shapes, and his new sculptures converse with both plant structures and animal carcasses.

Lindman’s embrace of the artificial, of beautifying acrylic mediums and fillers, seems meant to both undermine and underline his journey towards the complexity of nature. The variations of iridescence and transparency around what is perhaps meant to be a putrefied fragment of nature submits to an aesthetic of the repulsive, depicting urban detritus like dead pigeons and smashed rats, tempered by a simultaneous state of petrification in paint. There is a further interest here in Lindman’s determination to merge base materialism with the charms of the cosmetic and the incongruous.

— Joe Fyfe, painter and writer