

Stig Einarson

Artist Stig Einarson is a study in dualities. His artistic education began with the European classicism of the Idun Loven School in Sweden. There he studied under Scandinavian luminaries Inga Bagge and Leo Verde. Bagge's powerful sculpture, and charismatic personality, and Verde's ability to abstract natural forms, still exercise influence over Einarson's artistic endeavor. Einarson's training has ranged to the other end of the spectrum, the contemporary leading edge of the Art Center College of Design in California. This syncretism has resulted in an artist with attitudes and approaches that reflect both the old and new worlds.

Clearly Einarson's art has benefited from the contemporary spirit of experimentation, as well as the welcoming of non-traditional materials and techniques. He is not bound to the brush and oils. However, his sense of history, and a grounded tradition is ubiquitous. Whereas much of contemporary art has seemed frivolous, or even vacuous, new for the sake of newness, Einarson's reflects a depth that comes with a solid sense of identity, purpose, and authenticity. Einarson says, "You have to be with your times, but in a classical sense."

Befitting his bifurcated nature, Einarson has influences as diverse as Rembrandt, Michelangelo, Picasso, Lucio Fontana, Sam Francis and Jackson Pollock. Each can be seen in his artwork, but only if one can avoid the primary pitfall; being entranced by the sheer tangibility of the object. Einarson creates surfaces that are rich and sensuous. Some are scarred, excoriated, rendering a network of cicatrices. Others are smooth, oleaginous, rolling, lending verisimilitude to the sometimes atmospheric imagery. The almost automatic response is for the hand to raise, to reach out and feel. Such is the dangerous romance of the surface. When one looks more closely, a classical stroke, reminiscent of Rembrandt, or the composition of a Chinese landscape might be discerned.

Stig Einarson's artworks are deeply conceptual. The sources of his inspirations are as broad as his world. They range from news stories, to Biblical verse, to popular television shows. Like the Pythagorean ideal observer, Einarson is involved in a constant process of gathering ideas, impressions and themes. When a notion quickens, he spends hours of contemplation. His artistic oeuvre is constituted of his reflections on and about the human condition. Finally, the message clearly in mind, Einarson begins to create a vocabulary. Each formal element of each artwork takes on a symbolic significance. Surface, shape, figure, and color all signify. Even though spontaneity has a role in any action painting, on a deeper level it may be said that nothing is unintentional in Einarson's art, nothing trivial. In the fullest sense of the term, Stig Einarson is one of only a few true "abstractionists" working today. Unfortunately, "abstract" has come to mean, in the contemporary aesthetic lexicon, merely non-representative. But a deeper

MARION MEYER

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meaning has to do with the Latin etymology meaning "to draw away from." Thus, a truly abstract art would deal with essences. It would seek to embody verities, to make ideation manifest. This is what Einarson does.

To understand Stig Einarson's artistic language, one must look for subtle connections, beginning, again, at the surface. Many of his surfaces are atavistic, drawn from the character of his ancestors, the Viking culture. Both color and texture and tone bring to mind the famous prehistoric Scandinavian bronze Luhrs. There is no attempt to make a beautiful object, much less an ornamental one. Rather, these crude, dense facades are there to create an ambience at once emotive and intellectual. "I have activated intellectual emotion." His works elicit responses, stir emotions, and invite contemplation.

Stig Einarson forbids himself no material, nor any way of working it that facilitates his vision. For instance, in recent works on gangs and violence, holes that may well have been made with a bullet, and slashes that indeed were made with an ex-gangmember's switchblade, cover the canvas. His aim is "an analysis of my gut feelings," a synopsis and a commentary. His ultimate goal is communication. Einarson, like Duchamp, believes that as long as an artwork has not been addressed by an audience it is incomplete. The purpose is not didactic. The viewer is invited to respond, and his cathesis is a direct result of that of the artist's. Einarson says, "True art permits differences."

Given that Einarson is creating a symbolic system, and that communication is key, each work is measured by an exacting criterion of rectitude. His standard is uncompromising. He works in suites, and frequently will shelve a piece for months if it fails to be "right." Creating suites is necessary due to the complexity of the issues and topics. Obviously, no single artwork could exhaust the issue of, say, the effect of the popular media on children. So the artist allows himself the latitude of several canvases, several statements. And each must meet that standard. Even on commissions, even if the client is perfectly satisfied, the piece may not leave the studio without having passed the test.

Stig Einarson's father Einar, himself a master craftsman, was a violin builder, and his mother Linnea designed ceramics. They taught the young Stig that the first requirement in life, and by extension, in art and craft, is honesty. "Nothing is more, pure and honest than art." For this reason, Einarson proudly admits that some of his projects end up with the short walk to the dumpster. To fail occasionally is simple part of the process. But no work will ever go out unless and until it is right. "I could rework them. But sometimes it is easier to let them go, to start fresh." These old world values of integrity and authenticity will never be replaced with a current chic or fad, but will continue to form the central ideal in his work. In an age of art frequently bereft both of mastery and honesty, the art of Stig Einarson cannot fail to be refreshing or significant.

Douglas A. Deaver, Ph.D.

354 N. Coast Highway – Laguna Beach, CA 92651 – 949.497.5442
www.marionmeyergallery.com - marion@marionmeyergallery.com