

Astrid Kajsa Nylander / Set

21.08 – 19.09.2026

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Set

A conversation between Astrid Kajsa Nylander and Malin Ebbing

Imagine the most exquisite shades of pink: somewhere between chewing gum and pale coral. It runs through Astrid Kajsa Nylander's upcoming exhibition *Set*, appearing in works such as *Fris*, *Runda*, *Set#1*, and *Raumtrenner*. The colour feels both immediate and in flux, and if one were to take a bite out of it, it would taste like cotton candy.

In *Set*, painting becomes a space where games, probability, and everyday perception overlap. Game pieces, interior details, and dividers (that seem to be a part of a stage set) appear as familiar objects that also feel slightly displaced – caught in shifting systems of chance, choice, and consequence. The conversation below opens some of the thinking behind the work, tracing how colour, influence, and material decisions feed into a practice where painting is not only image-making, but also a way of testing how meaning takes shape – and slips away.

Vivid colour seems to be an essential part of your expression. How did your infatuation with colour begin?

"I grew up in the 1990s, when popular culture was saturated with bright colours, simple forms, and psychedelic patterns. These were also used as markers of identity and as a means of personal expression. It was extremely attractive and easy to lose oneself in that world. It is like discovering makeup and having the fantasy that you can transform yourself and become someone else. It felt especially powerful because my father despised the Spice Girls."

I read that the Gothenburg colourists have influenced your colour palette. I love Ragnar Sandberg and Inge Schiöler myself. Is there any work by this group that has made a particularly strong impression on you?

"I was born and raised in Gothenburg, and artists from the region influenced me from an early age. As a young person, I dreamed about the possibility of one day meeting peers. It was important to hear about artist groups and collectives and to have something to fantasise about. It doesn't really matter whether all the myths surrounding them are true. I mean, were the Colourists even a group, or is that just convenient storytelling?

There is a series of luminous paintings by Åke Göransson in which the motif seems to dissolve into fields of colour, and I keep returning to them. Because he lacked money and therefore materials, he painted over several earlier works, and traces of the previous painting remain visible beneath the new one, so that multiple layers of imagery dissolve into one another. This idea of reducing and dissolving the motif while still retaining it is something that has increasingly interested me."

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Yes, I can recognise your shared use of pale colour fields and visible brushstrokes that evoke a strikingly dreamlike effect. Tell me a bit about your upcoming exhibition *Set* at Belenius.

"*Set* is about the game, probability, and the place where life unfolds. It began with the game piece as a proxy for the person involved in the game – the player – as in the painting *Blue Piece*. At the end of 2025, I lost a major competition for a public commission for an intensive care unit to another artist.

When I received the news, it genuinely felt as if I fell off the board. I put everything into it, but I was eliminated. Shortly thereafter, I began a new and intense artistic collaboration that explores the romanticised self-sacrifice of the soldier."

When it comes to your subjects, how do you choose them? And how did you create this hue of pink that is reappearing in several of the works in *Set* and most explicitly in *Fris*?

"I mixed lime paint to paint a pink wall in my house, using white and a little English Red. After finishing the wall, I wanted to learn how to make a traditional oil ground using chalk, rabbit-skin glue, pigments of English Red and zinc white, and linseed oil. That is where the pink colour in *Fris* comes from.

My point of departure is the experience of life unfolding and the sensation of existing in a body here and now, in relation to everything that came before me. I try to create space within myself where I can respond to impulse, intuition, and desire. In compositions of everyday objects such as windows, buttons, and instruments, I reflect my personal microcosm within a global macrocosm, where the different states of objects intertwine with the process of painting."

Speaking of process, what does a day in the studio look like?

"A day in the studio usually begins with opening the window and turning on the radio. I work on several paintings in parallel. A great deal of time is spent painting, then painting over the same thing, and sitting and staring, trying to understand what isn't working. I keep several books in the studio that I return to for inspiration and guidance on resolving various painterly problems. My inner state often swings between excitement and despair. That may sound dramatic, and at times it feels somewhat pathetic that I can be so troubled by painting, because there is nowhere else I would rather be than in the studio. But the creative process is a kind of inner journey: questioning values, exploring them, and at the same time remaining anchored to a broader sense of what can function as an image."

You used to live in Berlin; did those years influence the way you work?

"I made friends and colleagues from all over the world who continue to influence me. In Germany, the idea of the artist as an eccentric is very much present. Humour, satire, and commentary on other artists' work are common components of one's own practice. I also lived in California for a while, where many people live very freely and express themselves in highly aesthetic ways. It's fun! Life is short, so why try to be like everyone else? That is probably what I took away from those experiences, and the anguish of realising how difficult it is to put that idea into practice in my own life. Haha!"

Belenius

When it comes to serendipity, is there an encounter with any other artist that has influenced your own expression?

"I have been thinking a great deal over the past few months about Henrike Naumann, who is representing Germany at this year's Venice Biennale and who tragically passed away earlier this year. She attended the same postgraduate program in Berlin that I later attended, a few years before me, and I had the opportunity to meet her during that time.

She was highly ambitious, yet also warm-hearted, funny, and generous. She sent invitations to her first major exhibition to every important person she could think of, using special stationery from her upbringing in East Germany, which she had perfumed and marked with lipstick kisses.

She inspired me through the way she presented herself as an artist, in portraits and through her artistic choices. She showed how an artistic practice can be profoundly serious – almost serving as an ambassador for her own work – while at the same time remaining deeply personal and driven by curiosity and pleasure. She dared to play, and she gave a great deal of herself in encounters with others."

Astrid Kajsa Nylander (b. 1989) in Gothenburg lives and works in Stockholm and Gotland, Sweden.

Nylander graduated with an MFA from Hochschule für Bildende Künste Hamburg in 2018. Working across performance and installation, her practice explores painting in an expanded field. In compositions of everyday objects such as windows, buttons, and instruments, a personal microcosm is reflected in a global macrocosm, where objects' different states mesh with the process of painting. In her ongoing series *minijobs* Nylander connects the textile qualities of the canvas with technologies such as sewing and weaving. The button is the starting point, ordinary and functional, yet a technical miracle that attaches one part to another, holding them together. Her methods reference Op Art painting's questioning of perspective, which aimed to transcend "good taste" in favor of accessibility through playful colors and strong contrasts that communicate directly with the viewer through processes in the eye that we are normally unaware of.

Recent exhibitions include OTP Copenhagen and Ekerö Kulturhus (2025), NSFW/Svivlova (2022), Belenius (2022), and Page NYC (2020). In 2019, Nylander received the Stiftung Sparkasse Siegen Prize for Junge Kunst, followed by a solo presentation at Kunstverein Siegen. In 2023, Nylander curated and exhibited a group exhibition *draw a door in the wall and slip through it* at Belenius, alongside friends and former classmates Frieda Toranzo Jaeger, Beatrice Marchi, and Tanja Nis-Hansen. Nylander is currently working on the performance project *What's a Mob to a King? (Plot-Twist Redemption)* with Berlin-based artist Liina Magnea. The project premiered at Sophiensaele in Berlin.

Nylander is represented in the collections of Moderna Museet, Mannheimer Swartling, Stockholm Konst, Ersta Diakoni, Region Västra Götaland, Region Sörmland, Region Skåne, Jönköpings kommun and Örebro kommun, among other municipal and private collections.