



IDA PERSSON  
CARETAKER  
18/03/2023-15/04/2023

# Ida Persson Care- taker



IDA PERSSON  
CARETAKER

Exhibition: 18/03/2023–15/04/2023  
Opening: 18/03/2023, 12.00–20.00

ISSUES is delighted to present the first solo exhibition with painter Ida Persson at the gallery. Carried out in her distinct style of geometric shapes in contrasting colors and evoking an abstract architecture, paintings 11, 12 and 13 in her 5th series, are presented as a triptych. Persson started making small cardboard objects reassembling machines around 2012, they were the starting point for the 1st series of paintings called *Apparat*. In 2020, Persson began painting the arm-like structures that characterize her 5th series of paintings called *Conductors*. In this series, the arms may guide, control; conduct. However, the arms may also embrace.

IDA PERSSON was trained at Umeå Academy of Fine Arts by painter Ann Edholm. Both artists explore human traits, the good and the bad, inherent in shapes not found in nature. While Edholm lets her abstract pictures become subjected to human conditions through their viewers, Persson's pictures portray things such as power, control and care-taking. As Ida Persson is a recipient of the Bærtling Scholarship, a third artist is brought to the discussion. Oscillating between spatial depiction and the absolutely abstract, Ida Persson's pictures become a stepping stone between Olle Bærtling's total aversion to nature at one end of the pond and actual nature on the other.

Ida Persson captures the ambiguous nature of power. Period. In her exhibition *Caretaker* at ISSUES Gallery, we're engulfed by a mere three paintings, but the message is loud and clear: we stand before something larger than ourselves.

(♥\_♥)

In the exhibition, Persson presents three new paintings. The rusty-colored triptych includes two out of three of Persson's recurring characters: the watcher and the conductor. These characters are recognized by certain specific signifiers. The watcher is like middle management with eye-like shapes, the conductor guides but also controls with its many arms. The third one is the gatekeeper who looks out for the other two and shares pictorial elements with them. They have different roles in the built-in bureaucracy of Persson's artistic practice and together, they create a dynamic expression. In this trinity, the gatekeeper is present through the title, *Caretaker*, and functions as an overseer.

(♥\_♥)

The first thing I thought of when seeing her paintings is of course architecture, specifically monumentalism. When I was 16 I went to Moscow for the first time. I've never felt so small as I did in front of any given building in that city. It's ingrained in the soul of the architecture. Of course, Moscow isn't alone in this type of architecture that suppresses its beholder but for me, it was the first time I felt urged to think about my insignificance. But the other side of this experience is being embosomed by something larger than yourself, and feeling the security of that. In this space, you're allowed not to think and let someone else take care of you. Similarly, Ida Persson mimics this experience. The first is what you see: a brutalist construction (doesn't have to be brutalist) and the second is what you feel: the construction looms over you because of how it hangs on the wall (high).

(♥\_♥)

But Persson's type of monumentalism isn't rooted in reality. Her structures are nonsensical and infinite. Jorge Louis Borges begins his short story *The Library of Babel* with "The universe (which others call the Library) is composed of an indefinite, perhaps an infinite, number of hexagonal galleries, with enormous ventilation shafts in the middle, encircled by very low railings". The six walls in each room have the same division: one wall for the entrance, one for the necessities for human survival, and four with bookshelves. The books (every book ever written in the entire universe) span from the biography of each living person to books of complete nonsense (the latter is predominant). Because of the vast bulk of information that is stored here, there is no way to make any sense of it and it's deemed useless and a source of suicidal despair for the librarians. I'll stop there because my main focus is the construction of the library. Like Borges' library, Persson's characters also depict infinite and systematic constructions that harbor both a sense of security and hold all of the knowledge of the universe within its walls, which makes them menacing (because they're infinite and there's nothing scarier than that).

ISSUES

This makes me think of magical realism as a movement and how it fits into Ida Persson's work. As an artistic style, it blurs the lines between reality and fantasy. In literature, many authors refer to Franz Kafka (what am I, a moody teenager?) Here, there is a kinship between Persson and Kafka, in illustrating the inner workings of bureaucracy. Kafka's description of bureaucracy in for example *The Castle* is always on the verge of the comical in an exaggerated state. The residents of the town consistently find ways to justify it. This is the duality of this system: it's set in place to protect, but who?

(♥\_♥)

But magical realism in the arts also has another kinship to Persson: as resistance to fascism and also a tool to analyze. Power when it's misused can often do so unnoticed (until it's too late). Ida Persson paints a picture of how power protects itself.

(♥\_♥)

(♥\_♥)

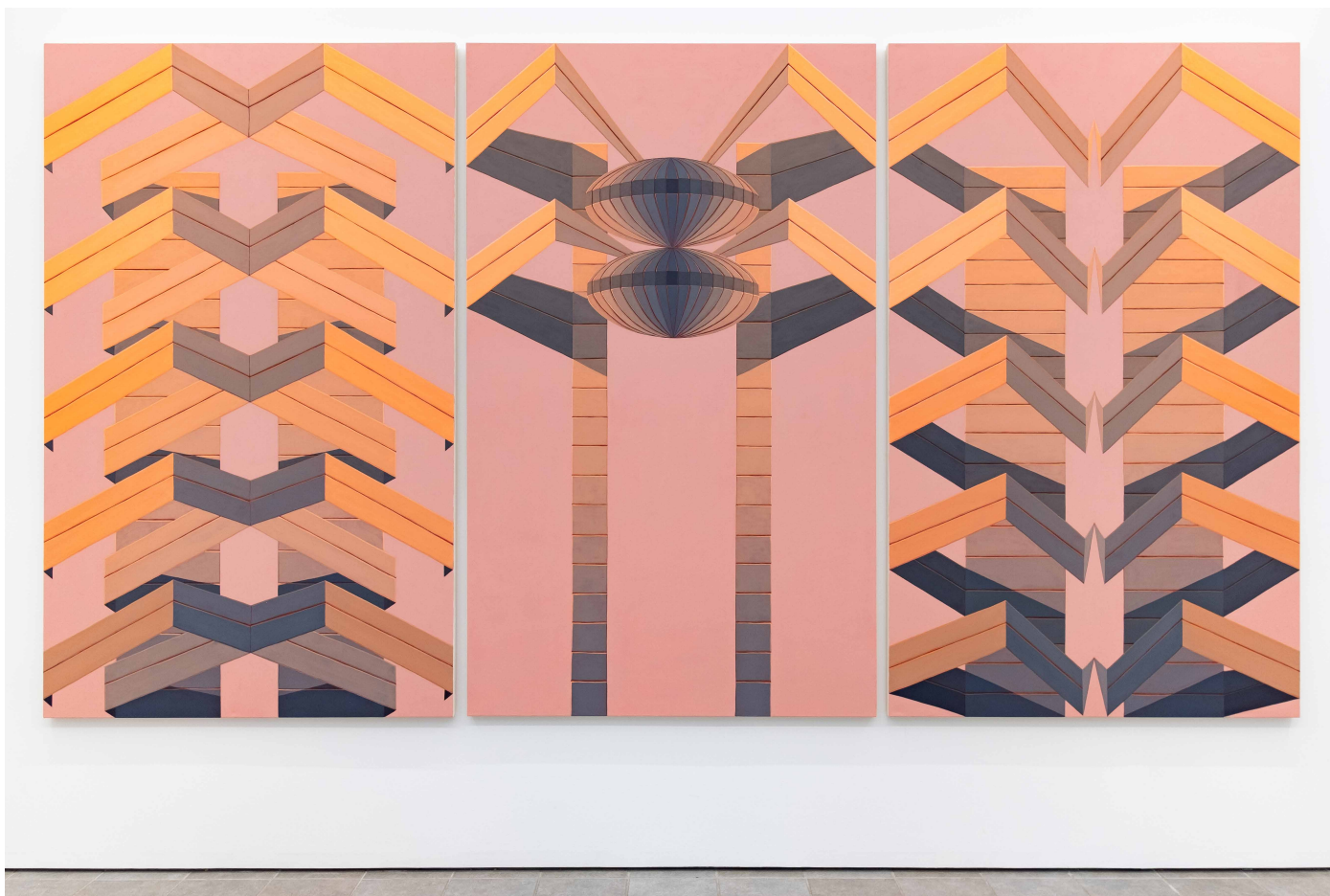
- Alida Ivanov, Stockholm, March 2023

Alida Ivanov is

a curator based in Stockholm. She is artistic director at Konstnärshuset, co-director at NSFW-Svilova and curator at Art Platform.

ISSUES





IDA PERSSON  
*Caretaker* triptych,  
left to right:

Conductor 5:11, 2023  
Watcher 5:12, 2023  
Conductor 5:13, 2023

Acrylic on canvas  
Each: 230×140 cm  
Total: 230×429 cm  
(with 4.5 cm margin)

